

# Robbinsville

T O W N S H I P

BE AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL

David Fried, Mayor

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February 25, 2021

New Jersey Board of Public Utilities  
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
P.O. Box 350  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350  
Attn: Aida Camacho, Board Secretary

**Re: In the Matter of the Implementation of L. 2018, C. 17 Regarding the Establishment of Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs**

**And**

**In the Matter of the Verified Petition of Jersey Central Power & Light Company for Approval of JCP&L's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plan Including Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs (JCP&L EE&C)**

**BPU Docket Nos. QO19010040 and EO20090620**

Members of the Board:

On behalf of the residents of the Township of Robbinsville and Township Council, I thank you convening this public hearing and allowing us the opportunity to comment on JCP&L's request for a rate increase in light of JCP&L's performance over the past several years.

Robbinsville, New Jersey - with a population of approximately 14,500 residents, a thriving warehouse park that includes two Amazon buildings and leading Fortune 500 pharmaceutical distributor McKesson - is one of approximately eight towns served by JCP&L throughout Mercer County. Robbinsville is partially served by JCP&L, with the remaining residents served by Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G). Robbinsville has suffered a long history of poor performance at the hands of JCP&L and strenuously objects to any permitted increase in customer rates. An increase in rates masked in the form of an "Energy Demand and Peak Demand Reduction" initiative only rewards poor performance, which begs the question: If JCP&L continues to receive rate increases with a history of such poor performance, why would JCP&L ever change? JCP&L can continue to serve residents in a poor manner, yet continue to reap the

benefits of increased rates. This is an illogical proposition and unfair to the residents of Robbinsville Township and other municipalities throughout the State of New Jersey.

As Mayor, I am the one being contacted by Robbinsville residents serviced by JCP&L with complaints of service outages, service calls, customer service issues and overall poor performance. In Robbinsville, there are frequent outages suffered by residents at random points in the day and night without explanation with inclement weather not a factor. The inconsistent pattern of outages has long frustrated the municipal residents, our businesses and the municipal government.

By way of brief background, as Mayor, on two occasions, I have undertaken the filing of Formal Complaints against JCP&L due to their poor performance.

The first was filed in 2012. This Complaint specifically related to JCP&L's response to Hurricane Irene. While this matter was eventually settled, the genesis of the action was due to a poor response to outages, failure to communicate, and faulty substation restoration process. The lack of communication with municipal officials at that time was unacceptable. For example, Robbinsville undertook steps to administer traffic, have its public works department prepare areas for work crews (for which ultimately one truck and one individual appeared with only a crescent wrench). In relation to these outages, Robbinsville suffered increased costs related to maintaining municipal stability and attempts to assist JCP&L. As time went by, JCP&L failed to provide correct and up-to-date information to the residents and businesses located within Robbinsville. JCP&L did not respond to inquiries regarding the outage, and the anticipated delay in restoring power. As you can imagine, an extremely frustrating response to an extremely stressful time.

The second complaint was filed in 2020 and is a matter pending before the Office of Administrative Law. This Complaint once again focuses on JCP&L's poor performance, lack of communication and failure to address substation concerns. As a result of Tropical Storm Isaias, Robbinsville suffered an inordinate number of outages and JCP&L failed to communicate with either Robbinsville officials or residents. Robbinsville officials attempted communications with JCP&L to ascertain a status of restoration of power and were responded to with the following "currently in storm mode and that JCP&L is unable to provide estimate time of restoration..." This communication was provided through the line of communications dedicated to elected officials.

During Isaias, Robbinsville suffered two significant outages in areas where active service lines and transformers were down and out of service. These specific outages were the cause of great public safety concern. The downed power lines were sparking and there were active fires.

As you will note JCP&L, specifically in response to Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Isaias, conducted its operations in a stop-gap manner with no foresight or preparedness for providing electricity as required by a public utility in the State of New Jersey. The lack of preparation and a poor effort put forth by JCP&L in restoring areas without power, and using reasonable diligence to avoid interruptions of service, must not be rewarded with a rate increase for whatever purpose it may be requested.

Robbinsville residents and businesses have experienced repetitive substandard actions in the restoration of power process, outage restoration communications, and many other performance issues that could only be rated as "poor." It is evident that over the course of many years, JCP&L has conducted its operations in a manner that harbors no foresight, care, or preparedness for providing electricity as required by a public utility in the State of New Jersey. It is important to

note the Township of Robbinsville does not - and did not - suffer such inadequacies in service or communication in the portion of the Township serviced by PSE&G during the aforementioned severe weather events.

It is beyond comprehension to allow JCP&L to receive a rate increase masked in the form of a new initiative when it continues to fail to provide safe, adequate, and proper service to its existing customers in Robbinsville, New Jersey. In fact, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities should consider a revocation of its franchise, or allow our municipality the ability to switch our most vulnerable customers over to PSE&G.

As Mayor, I am requesting that the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities deny this JCP&L request to increase rates and, instead, impose stricter standards for the improvement of service – the kind of service Robbinsville residents and other citizens throughout the State of New Jersey deserve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Fried", written in a cursive style.

Dave Fried

Mayor, Township of Robbinsville