

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Edward A. Garvey
Joel Jacobs
Marshall Johnson
LeRoy Koppendrayner
Gregory Scott

Chair
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner

In the Matter of an Extended Area Service
Petition among the Exchanges of Gibbon,
Fairfax and Winthrop

ISSUE DATE: March 8, 1999

DOCKET NO. P-551, 572/CP-97-128

ORDER CERTIFYING POLLING RESULTS
AND DENYING PETITION

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On January 27, 1997, telephone customers in the Gibbon, Fairfax and Winthrop telephone exchanges filed a set of petitions for Extended Area Service (EAS) among these three communities. CenturyTel of Minnesota, Inc. (CenturyTel) now provides local telephone service in Gibbon and Fairfax. Winthrop Telephone Company (WTC) serves the Winthrop exchange.

On March 14 and 17, 1997, USWC (which served the Gibbon and Fairfax exchanges at the time) and WTC submitted traffic studies.

On April 15, 1997, the Minnesota Department of Public Service (the Department) submitted its report and recommendation. The Department reported that none of the routes met the Commission's traffic criterion that at least 50 percent of the customers in the petitioning exchange(s) must make three or more calls per month to the petitioned exchange(s). Since the calling volume did not meet the Commission's traffic threshold, the Department recommended that the Commission deny these petitions.

On May 23, 1997, the Commission received a letter from the petition sponsor, the Winthrop Economic Development Authority (EDA). The EDA Director requested that the Commission continue to process the petitions from Gibbon, Fairfax and Winthrop based on legislation that the governor signed into law on April 28, 1997: the School District EAS statute [Minn. Law (1997) Chapter 59 - H. F. No. 211]. The three communities make up Independent School District #2365.

On December 22, 1997, the Commission issued its ORDER REQUIRING THE FILING OF COST STUDIES AND PROPOSED RATES in this matter. The Commission found that these petitions conformed to the School District EAS statute and directed the affected telephone companies to file cost studies and proposed rates.

On May 22, 1998, CenturyTel and WTC (the Companies) submitted cost studies.

On June 17, 1998, the Department filed comments, recommending that the Commission accept the Companies' cost studies and proposed rates, and proceed to polling telephone subscribers in

Gibbon, Fairfax and Winthrop.

On October 23, 1998, the Commission issued its ORDER ESTABLISHING RATES FOR POLLING.

Polling of telephone subscribers in Independent School District (ISD) #2365 (Fairfax, Gibbon, and Winthrop exchanges) was conducted between December 28, 1998 and February 18, 1999.

The Commission met on March 2, 1999 to consider this matter.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The final criterion for a School District EAS petition is whether there is adequate customer support for the proposed EAS route. If a majority of customers in each exchange vote in favor of installing the proposed EAS route, the Commission is authorized and directed to order the relevant local telephone companies to install the service. If not, the petition must be denied.

The Commission has reviewed the results of the polling of the Fairfax, Gibbon, and Winthrop customers and will certify the following results:

The results for Fairfax were as follows:

Yes		No	
#	%	#	%
275	39.9	414	60.1

The results for Gibbon were as follows:

Yes		No	
#	%	#	%
276	59.7	186	40.3

The results for Winthrop were as follows:

Yes		No	
#	%	#	%
333	47.6	366	52.4

In the Fairfax and Winthrop exchanges, less than a majority of the customers responding to the poll voted in favor of installing the proposed EAS route. Accordingly, the Commission will deny this petition and direct CenturyTel, the local telephone company serving the Fairfax and Gibbon exchanges, and Winthrop Telephone Company, serving customers in the Winthrop exchange, to

notify their customers, as set forth in more detail in the Ordering Paragraphs.

ORDER

1. The polling results for the Fairfax, Gibbon, and Winthrop exchanges are hereby certified as set forth above.
2. In accord with the results of that polling, the Commission hereby denies the petition for School District EAS between the Fairfax, Gibbon, and Winthrop exchanges.
3. Within 10 days of this Order, CenturyTel shall file a proposed customer notice for its customers in the Fairfax and Gibbon exchanges for approval by Commission Staff. The notice should list the results of the polling. After approval, the Company shall serve the notice in the first possible billing cycle.
4. Within 10 days of this Order, Winthrop Telephone Company (WTC) shall file a proposed customer notice for its customers in the Winthrop exchange for approval by Commission Staff. The notice should list the results of the polling. After approval, WTC shall serve the notice in the first possible billing cycle.
5. Upon Commission approval of the Companies' customer notices, this docket (P-551, 572/CP-97-128) will be closed.
6. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar
Executive Secretary

(S E A L)

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