

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

Public Meeting held April 14, 2022

Commissioners Present:

Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, Chairman
John F. Coleman, Jr., Vice Chairman
Ralph V. Yanora

Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC for Approval to Offer, Render, Furnish or Supply Telecommunications Services to the Public as a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier in the Service Territories of all thirty-five Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania A-2021-3030129

Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC for Approval to Offer, Render, Furnish or Supply Telecommunications Services to the Public as a Competitive Access Provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania A-2021-3030138

Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC for Approval to Offer, Render, Furnish or Supply Telecommunications Services to the Public as a Detariffed Facilities-based Interexchange Carrier throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania A-2021-3030140

Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC for Approval to Offer, Render, Furnish or Supply Telecommunications Services to the Public as a Detariffed Interexchange Carrier Reseller throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania A-2021-3030142

ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

On December 21, 2021, Vero Fiber Networks LLC (Applicant or Vero Fiber) filed an Application seeking Certificates of Public Convenience under our orders issued pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, 47 U.S.C. §§ 201 *et seq.*, (TA-96)¹ and to Chapter 11 of the

¹ In light of the policy objectives of TA-96, market entry requirements for telecommunication service providers are set out in *In Re: Implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Docket No. M-00960799 (Order entered June 3, 1996; Order on Reconsideration entered September 9, 1996) (*TA-96 Implementation Orders*).

Public Utility Code (Code) (66 Pa.C.S. §§ 1101 *et seq.*) evidencing authority to provide the following telecommunications services to the public:

- (1) As a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) in the Service Territories of all thirty-five Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs) within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania;
- (2) As a Competitive Access Provider (CAP) throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania;
- (3) As a Detariffed Facilities-based Interexchange Carrier (IXC)² throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and
- (4) As a Detariffed Interexchange Carrier Reseller (IXC Reseller)³ throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Applicant was granted provisional authority pursuant to our Secretarial Letter of February 8, 2022, to provide the proposed IXC, IXC Reseller, CAP and CLEC services in the service territories of Verizon Pennsylvania LLC and Verizon North LLC pursuant to its proposed tariffs during the pendency of the application process. As required by 52 Pa. Code § 5.14, the Application also was published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.⁴ The Applicant was granted a waiver concerning publishing notice of its Application in newspapers of general circulation. The protest period for this Application expired March 7, 2021. The assigned utility code is 3124794.

The Applicant complied with notice requirements set forth in our *TA-96 Implementation Orders* by serving a copy of its Application upon the aforementioned ILECs, the Office of Consumer Advocate, the Office of Small Business Advocate, and the Office of Attorney General. No protests were filed. No hearings were held.

Information concerning the Applicant is as follows:

² Section 3018(b)(2) of the Public Utility Code, 66 Pa.C.S. § 3018(b)(2) gives IXCs the option to: (1) file and maintain tariffs with the Commission; (2) file and maintain price lists with the Commission; or (3) detariff. Further, our regulation at 52 Pa. Code § 63.104 outlines the disclosure requirements for filing and maintaining tariffs or operating as a detariffed IXC. The Applicant has elected to operate as a detariffed IXC, subject to Pennsylvania state contract and consumer protection laws.

³ *Id.*

⁴ See 51 Pa.B. 2249 (April 17, 2021).

- The Applicant is a Colorado Limited Liability company with its principal place of business at 1023 Walnut Street, Boulder, Colorado 80302, telephone (800) 691-8376, facsimile (215) 963-5000.
- The Applicant complied with Pennsylvania law relating to a foreign limited liability company.
- The Applicant's registered office provider within Pennsylvania is Corporation Service Company 2595 Interstate Dr #103, Harrisburg, PA 17110.
- The Applicant's Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency contact is Nathan McGinn, SVP Operations, Vero Fiber Networks LLC, PO Box 1110, Boulder, Colorado 80306, telephone (303) 350-4060, facsimile (215) 963-5000.
- Correspondence to resolve complaints may be directed to Gregg Strumberger, Chief Legal Officer, Vero Fiber Networks LLC, PO Box 1110, Boulder, Colorado 80306, telephone (303) 350-4060, facsimile (215) 963-5000.
- The Applicant will not be using a fictitious name.
- The Applicant is operating as a public utility in other states: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.
- The Applicant has no affiliates or predecessors within Pennsylvania.
- The Applicant has no predecessors rendering public utility service outside Pennsylvania.

The Applicant understands that if it plans to cease doing business within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is under a duty to first file an application with the Commission requesting authority to abandon or cease providing the services it offers to its customers.⁵

⁵ 66 Pa.C.S. § 1102(a)(2).

According to its Application, Vero Fiber seeks authority to provide facilities based and resold local exchange, interexchange, and competitive access telecommunications services in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Vero Fiber avers that its primary business is to provide telecommunications and broadband infrastructure to underserved schools and libraries, both directly and through wholesale arrangements, by connecting those schools and libraries with reliable, scalable, and secure connectivity. Vero Fiber further avers that it intends to deliver an aggregation of technologies utilizing fiber optic cable depending on the customer's location and needs. Vero Fiber states that it will primarily provide services using its own facilities and facilities leased from other carriers, but also seeks authority to provide services on a resold basis. Vero Fiber further states that it proposes to provide customized service solutions to educational, healthcare, government, banking, telecommunications and business customers in Pennsylvania.

Issues affecting CLECs have been addressed in a number of Commission proceedings.⁶ A CLEC applicant is expected to adhere to the requirements relative to universal service programs, as initially set forth or as subsequently enlarged or modified.⁷ Also, per federal rules, CLECs are required to ensure the efficient usage of their numbering resources and are required to semi-annually report their utilization and forecast data to the North American Numbering Plan Administrator. *See* 47 C.F.R. §§ 52.5 *et seq.* Any CLEC failing to comply with state and/or federal orders related to numbering may be subject to the reclamation of their numbering resources as well as fines pursuant to the Public Utility Code, 66 Pa.C.S. § 3301. *See Implementation of Numbering Conservation Measures Granted to Pennsylvania by the Federal Communications Commission in its Order released March 31, 2000 – NXX Code Reclamation*, Docket No. M-00001373 (Order entered August 22, 2000), 30 *Pa.B.* 4701 (Commission established process for reclaiming NXX codes from carriers that have failed to activate them within six months of their availability for assignment to customers).

⁶ *See, e.g., MFS Intelenet et al.* Docket Nos. A-310203F0002 *et al.*, (Orders entered October 4, 1995; July 31, 1996; and August 7, 1997); *Pa. PUC v. Bell*, Docket No. R-00963578 (Order entered February 6, 1997); *Pa. PUC v. GTE*, Docket No. R-00963666 (Order entered May 9, 2002); *Joint Petition of Nextlink Pennsylvania, Inc. et al.*, Docket Nos. P-00991648 and P-00991649 (Order entered September 30, 1999), *aff'd sub nom. Bell Atlantic-Pennsylvania, Inc. v. Pa. PUC*, 763 A.2d 440 (Pa. Cmwlth 2000), *vacated in part sub nom. MCI Worldcom Inc. v. Pa. PUC*, 844 A.2d 1239 (Pa. 2004) (state court lacked jurisdiction to review unbundled network elements) (*Global Order*); as well as other proceedings.

⁷ *See Universal Service Investigation*, Docket No. I-00940035 (Order entered January 28, 1997).

Further, Section 253(b) of TA-96 permits a state Commission to impose, on a competitively-neutral basis and consistent with universal service provisions, requirements necessary to preserve and advance universal service, protect the public safety and welfare, ensure the continued quality of telecommunications services, and safeguard the rights of consumers. In response, we articulated explicit concerns relative to an applicant's financial fitness, tariff compliance, and rates.⁸ In this case, the Applicant has provided financial information to support its Application. We conclude that the Applicant has demonstrated that it is financially capable of providing telecommunications services as a CLEC, a CAP, a Facilities-based IXC, and as an IXC Reseller.

Applicants are also required to be technically and managerially capable of providing public utility service. In the notarized affidavit in the Application, the Applicant swears and affirms its ability and commitment to providing the proposed services in full compliance with all provisions of Pennsylvania and federal law. Additionally, we again note that no entities contested the fitness of the Applicant. We therefore conclude that the Applicant has sufficiently demonstrated that it possesses the requisite technical and managerial fitness elements to provide the proposed services.

The Commission also requires that applicants seeking to provide local telecommunications services in Pennsylvania take steps to protect the public safety of consumers. One means of ensuring the public safety of consumers in the increasingly competitive telecommunications marketplace is to ensure that new entrants provide their consumers with access to a seamless communications infrastructure for emergency services, such as 911. Therefore, in accordance with the notarized affidavit in the Application, the Applicant avers that it has contacted by certified letter each county or municipal authority where it intends to provide CLEC telecommunications services and made the necessary arrangements for the provisioning of emergency 911 service.

We conclude that the Applicant has met the requirements for certification as a CLEC, a CAP, a Facilities-based IXC, and as an IXC Reseller, consistent with this Order. Moreover,

⁸ See *Application of Blue Ribbon Rentals II, Inc., d/b/a Talk One America, for Authority to Begin to Offer, Render, Furnish, or Supply Competitive Local Exchange Telecommunication Services to the Public in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Docket No. A-310442 (Orders entered April 25 and August 4, 1997).

premised upon our review of the Application and the proposed tariffs, and consistent with our Orders, the Code, our regulations and TA-96, we conclude that the Applicant's proposed services do not raise concerns at this time regarding safety, adequacy, reliability, or privacy. We note, however, there are deficiencies in the proposed tariffs.

We shall direct the Applicant to revise the proposed tariffs in accordance with the changes noted in Appendix A of this Order.⁹ The Applicant shall thereafter file its Initial Tariffs reflecting the requested changes on or before sixty days from the date of entry of this Order. The Applicant may file its Initial Tariffs electronically, consistent with Commission rules.¹⁰ Copies of the Initial Tariffs shall also be served upon the same entities receiving service of the original Application, including the incumbent local exchange carriers. If the time required for such resolution and filing exceeds sixty days, the Applicant may request an extension of an additional sixty days with the Commission's Secretary. Thus, if the Initial Tariffs are not filed within sixty days (120 days including the extension) of the entry of this Order, the Application will be dismissed and the authority granted herein will be revoked without further Commission Order.

We note that the Commission will only approve tariff provisions regarding limitation of liability consistent with law. Any tariff provisions contained in the Initial Tariffs regarding limitation of liability inconsistent with any applicable laws, rules and regulations will be deemed inoperative and superseded.

To the extent that the proposed tariffs contain rates, the Initial Tariffs may become effective on one day's notice from the date upon which they are filed and served.

Carriers are required to provide telecommunications service to customers in Pennsylvania within one year of certification.¹¹

⁹ Regardless of the review process, any tariff provision(s) inconsistent with the provisions of the Code, TA-96, our regulations, or Orders will be deemed inoperative and superseded.

¹⁰ See *Final Rulemaking to Permit Electronic Filing*, Docket No. L-00070187 (Order entered May 23, 2008).

¹¹ For complete details regarding this requirement, including consequences for non-compliance, see *Final Order Regarding the Commission's Plan to Implement a One-Year Timeframe for Inactive Telecommunication Carriers to Provide Service on an Annual Basis within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Docket No. M-2011-2273119 (Order entered July 19, 2012).

In accordance with the affidavit that accompanied the application for a Certificate of Public Convenience, the Applicant has agreed to abide by all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and by the decisions of the Commission. We remind the Applicant that, in accordance with our *TA-96 Implementation Orders*, a public utility that seeks Commission certification or that is certificated in Pennsylvania to provide telecommunications service, as defined by state and federal law, must provide the service in full compliance with all applicable provisions of Pennsylvania and federal law. This includes compliance with Section 1511 of Pennsylvania's Business Corporation Law, 15 Pa.C.S. § 1511,¹² when siting facilities/equipment in public rights-of-way. Failure to comply with applicable law may result in fines being imposed against a public utility or in the suspension or revocation of the utility's Certificates of Public Convenience, consistent with due process.

We remind the Applicant that certificated public utilities in Pennsylvania are required to file with the Commission an accurate annual financial report and an accurate separate statement of all gross intrastate (wholesale and retail) revenues for fiscal assessment purposes, as received from operations conducted pursuant to the authority granted by the Commission's certification order.¹³ To the extent the Applicant provides both jurisdictional CAP and non-jurisdictional ISP services in Pennsylvania, the Applicant is required to accurately and separately account for and report to the Commission its jurisdictional revenues related to the CAP portion of its business. Additional reporting of intrastate retail revenues is also required for the purpose of Pennsylvania Universal Service Fund contribution assessments. Failure to comply with applicable reporting requirements may result in billing for back payments due and the imposition of fines and/or other lawful remedies, including revocation of certification, consistent with due process.

¹² 15 Pa.C.S. § 1511(e) provides as follows: "A public utility corporation shall have the right to enter upon and occupy streets, highways, waters and other public ways and places for one or more of the principal purposes specified in subsection (a) and ancillary purposes reasonably necessary or appropriate for the accomplishment of the principal purposes, including the placement, maintenance and removal of aerial, surface and subsurface public utility facilities thereon or therein. Before entering upon any street, highway or other public way, the public utility corporation shall obtain such permits as may be required by law and shall comply with the lawful and reasonable regulations of the governmental authority having responsibility for the maintenance thereof."

¹³ See 66 Pa.C.S. § 510(b); see also 52 Pa. Code §§ 63.31 *et seq.* We note that flexibility for the Applicant's system of accounts is provided by our own annual reporting regulations for CLECs that the Applicant may also utilize. See generally 52 Pa. Code §§ 63.31(3) and 63.32(c).

Conclusion

Accordingly, consistent with the aforementioned statutory criteria in the Code and also with our Orders, our regulations, and TA-96, we shall grant the Application and issue Certificates of Public Convenience to provide detariffed facilities-based IXC services and detariffed IXC Reseller services in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Upon the approval of the Initial Tariffs, Certificates of Public Convenience shall be issued evidencing the Applicant's authority to provide services as a CAP throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and as a CLEC in the service territories of all thirty-five Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as described in the Application and as consistent with this Order, our decisions cited herein, and such other proceedings; **THEREFORE,**

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC at Docket No. A-2021-3030129, for authority to operate as a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier in the service territories of all thirty-five Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is granted, consistent with this Order.

2. That the Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC at Docket No. A-2021-3030138, for authority to operate as a Competitive Access Provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is granted, consistent with this Order.

3. That the Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC at Docket No. A-2021-3030140, for authority to operate as a detariffed Facilities-based Interexchange Carrier throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is granted, consistent with this Order, and that a Certificate of Public Convenience be issued evidencing such approval.

4. That the Application of Vero Fiber Networks LLC at Docket No. A-2021-3030142, for authority to operate as a detariffed Interexchange Carrier Reseller throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is granted, consistent with this Order, and that a Certificate of Public Convenience be issued evidencing such approval.

5. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall either eFile or submit an original copy of its Initial Tariffs consistent with the requisite changes noted in Appendix A of this Order within sixty (60) days (120 days including an approved extension) after the date of entry of this Order. **Vero Fiber Networks LLC is directed to identify any changes made to the proposed Initial Tariffs that are in addition to the changes noted in Appendix A.** Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall serve copies of its Initial Tariffs on each entity receiving a copy of the original Application. The Initial Tariffs may become effective on or after one (1) day's notice from the date upon which they are filed and served.

6. That Initial Tariffs shall be labeled on their faces according to their respective authority: "Competitive Access Provider Tariff" and "Competitive Local Exchange Carrier Tariff."

7. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall comply with all the provisions of the Public Utility Code, as now exist or as may be hereafter amended, and with all pertinent rules, regulations, and Orders of this Commission, now in effect or as may be prescribed by this Commission, including those identified in this Order.

8. That the authority granted herein, to the extent that it duplicates authority now held by or subsequently granted to Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall not be construed as conferring more than one operating right to Vero Fiber Networks LLC.

9. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall maintain accurate accounting records that properly classify and segment its Interexchange Carrier Reseller, Competitive Local Exchange Carrier, Competitive Access Provider, and Facilities-based Interexchange Carrier revenues from its operations within the Commonwealth and file with the Commission an accurate annual financial report and an accurate separate statement of gross intrastate (wholesale and retail) revenues for fiscal assessment purposes.

10. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall maintain accurate accounting records that properly classify and segment its gross retail intrastate revenues for purposes of the Pennsylvania Universal Service Fund contribution assessment report.

11. That in accordance with Commission Orders entered on October 5, 2005, at Docket No. M-00041857 and on August 21, 2006, at Docket No. L-00050176, Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall follow the reporting requirements outlined at the following website: www.puc.pa.gov/telecom/docs/Reporting_Requirements.docx.

12. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall file such affiliated interest agreements as may be necessary relative to any transactions with affiliates within thirty (30) days of entry of this Order.

13. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall make 711 abbreviated dialing available to access Telecommunications Relay Service and to arrange its switching equipment to translate these calls to the assigned toll-free number, (888) 895-1197, in order to route calls to the Telecommunications Relay Service Provider, in accordance with the Commission's Order entered on February 4, 2000, at Docket No. M-00900239.

14. That in the event that Vero Fiber Networks LLC has not, on or before sixty (60) days (120 days including an approved extension) from the date of entry of this Order, complied with the requirements set forth herein, the Application at Docket Nos. A-2021-3030129, A-2021-3030138, A-2021-3030140, and A-2021-3030142 shall be dismissed and the authority granted herein revoked without further Commission Order.

15. That upon the approval of the Initial Tariffs, Certificates of Public Convenience shall be issued authorizing Vero Fiber Networks LLC furnish services as a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier in the service territories of all thirty-five Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and as a Competitive Access Provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, consistent with this Order.

16. That changes and/or additions made to an approved, filed tariff shall be made in the form of supplements, consecutively numbered in the order of their filing dates, and the tariff designation shall be in the following manner: Supplement No. ___ to Tariff Telephone Pa. P.U.C. No. ____.

17. That Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall add its Pennsylvania tariffs to its website within thirty (30) days of the filing of its Initial Tariffs and mark them "Pending." Within thirty

(30) days of receipt of its Certificates of Public Convenience, Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall make any required modifications to the tariff on its website and remove the “Pending” notation. Thereafter, Vero Fiber Networks LLC will continually update the website whenever any supplemental revisions to the tariff are approved by the Commission such that the website tariff is a true and accurate representation of its tariff on file with the Commission.

18. That within thirty (30) days of receipt of its Certificates of Public Convenience, Vero Fiber Networks LLC shall contact Cyndi Page ((717) 787-5722; cypage@pa.gov) of the Commission’s Office of Communications to create a link from the Commission’s website to Vero Fiber Network LLC’s website.

19. That if Vero Fiber Networks LLC plans to cease doing business within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it shall request authority from the Commission for permission prior to ceasing.

20. That a copy of this Order be served on the Bureau of Registration and Taxpayer Management in the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Bureau of 9-1-1 Programs.

BY THE COMMISSION,



Rosemary Chiavetta
Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: April 14, 2022

ORDER ENTERED: April 14, 2022

Vero Fiber Networks LLC
Docket Nos. A-2021-3030129 & A-2021-3030138;
Proposed Competitive Local Exchange Carrier and Competitive Access Provider Tariffs

The proposed tariff contains certain deficiencies that must be addressed by the Applicant before the tariff can be approved and the Certificate of Public Convenience issued. **The Applicant must submit a copy of this Appendix with its revised compliance tariff. On that copy, please note the page/sheet of the compliance tariff where the required revision is located for each item below.**

Tariff deficiencies noted – CLEC Tariff (A-2021-3030129), Tariff No. 1

1. All Pages: Enter issued and effective dates as per ordering paragraph.
2. Cover Page: Please reference the ILEC territories and the tariff boundaries that Vero Fiber will reflect.
3. Liability: The limitations of liability tariff provisions should be generally consistent with the Commission’s relevant Policy Statement at 52 Pa. Code § 69.87 and the Commission Order at Docket No. M-00981209.
4. Section 4.2: Modify 911 language to reflect Act 12 of 2015.
5. Section 5.1: Please remove Bentleyville and Marianna and Scenery Hill tariff references
6. Section 5.2: Please place the Bentleyville and Marianna and Scenery Hill exchanges under the Consolidated Communications section.

Switched Access deficiencies noted – Switched Access Tariff (A-2021-3030129), Tariff No. 2

1. All Pages: Enter issued and effective dates as per ordering paragraph.
2. Liability: The limitations of liability tariff provisions should be generally consistent with the Commission’s relevant Policy Statement at 52 Pa. Code § 69.87 and the Commission Order at Docket No. M-00981209.

Tariff deficiencies noted – CAP Tariff (A-2021-3030138), Tariff No. 3

1. All Pages: Enter issued and effective dates as per ordering paragraph.
2. Cover Page: Please mark your CAP tariff “Business Only”
3. Liability: The limitations of liability tariff provisions should be generally consistent with the Commission’s relevant Policy Statement at 52 Pa. Code § 69.87 and the Commission Order at Docket No. M-00981209.