

## How to navigate Unitil variable rates for customers considering Plaistow Community Power – Emily Manns, ECM Power LLC

Community Power is a program that provides customers with a new competitive default service supply provider. The distribution utility Unitil continues to provide billing, emergency and transmission services. Customers can come and go from the program without program fees or penalties, and customers may choose to opt out of the program effective on their next available monthly billing date.

### Summary:

- ✓ Customers that want to join the Plaistow Community Power program should go ahead. Program participants that subsequently opt out should avoid opting out in the winter months, if possible, to avoid temporary exposure to the highest variable monthly Unitil supply rates.
- ✓ Customers that join the program and stay in the program are not subject to variable rates.
- ✓ Customers on competitive supply that want to join the program may avoid the variable utility rates by enrolling directly with the program supplier after checking with their current supplier for no early termination fees.

Customers that enroll and then opt out after program enrolment are returned to the fixed Unitil default service rate, but not until the next six-month utility rate period (February 1 or August 1). In the interim, Unitil charges customers a variable monthly rate, starting on the next available monthly meter read date following the request to opt out. The variable rates may apply to the customer's bill for as little as a few days or up to six months, depending on when the customer calls to opt out.

The variable rates are the utility's negotiated cost of power, and are the basis of the fixed customer rate for the same six-month rate period. The current Unitil residential fixed rate of 11.777 cents/kWh is slightly higher than the average of the variable rates, shown at right, for the same period. However, the highest (winter) variable rate is more than double the lowest rate in the same period. This means timing an opt out decision to avoid winter rates is advisable, if possible. Fixed and variable rates for the next period will be set in December for a February 1 rate change, and are expected to be as variable over the period.

Month	Unitil residential variable rates (approved)
August	\$ 0.09804
September	\$ 0.08762
October	\$ 0.08819
November	\$ 0.10278
<b>December</b>	<b>\$ 0.14377</b>
January 2026	\$ 0.17414

Below are some examples and a detailed table illustrating how the variable rate opt out works for Plaistow customers and program enrollment beginning in December.

1. An enrolled customer that calls to opt out of the program after receiving their December electric bill would be charged the variable rate starting on their next available billing date, in January. Then on February 1, the customer would be automatically switched by Unitil to the fixed utility default service rate, spending a short time, from 1-30 days on the high January variable rate.
2. An enrolled customer that calls to opt out after receiving their January electric bill would be charged a variable rate starting on their February bill date, and would be subject to variable rates for the entire next 6-month rate period starting with the February variable rate. During this period some of the variable rates will be higher including February than the fixed rate, and some will be lower. This customer should consider delaying opting out for a lower initial variable rate later in the spring.
3. An enrolled customer that calls to opt out after receiving their April electric bill would be charged the variable rate starting on their May billing date, and pay variable rates until the next utility rate change August 1, up to three months. This customer could safely opt out at a lower variable rate or compare spring variable rates in the period and consider waiting until June (but not July) to call to opt out.

The table below illustrates the monthly rates for enrolled and opt-out customers through August 2026. Note that only the program rate is known for the program term of 24 months.

Month	Description	Enrolled customer Program rate*	Opt out before program starts	Opt-out after program enrollment:			
				Opt out after Dec bill date and before January bill date	Opt out before February bill date	Opt out before May bill date	Opt out before July bill date
December	Program enrollment	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.11777	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114
January 2026	Month 1	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.11777	variable - high	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114
February	Month 2	\$ 0.114	new fixed	new fixed	variable rate	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114
March	Month 3	\$ 0.114			starts high	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114
April	Month 4	\$ 0.114			but averages	\$ 0.114	\$ 0.114
May	Month 5	\$ 0.114			to the fixed	variable - low	\$ 0.114
June	Month 6	\$ 0.114	new fixed	new fixed	rate over the	variable	\$ 0.114
July	Month 7	\$ 0.114			period.	variable	variable
August	Month 8	\$ 0.114	new fixed	new fixed	new fixed	new fixed	new fixed

\*Program rate is for Plaistow through December 2027, other programs will have different rates and terms. New fixed utility rates start on the first of the month, not the customer's bill date.