

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Application for increase in water/wastewater rates in Alachua, Brevard, DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Palm Beach, Pasco, Polk, Putnam, Seminole, Sumter, Volusia, and Washington Counties by Aqua Utilities Florida, Inc.

DOCKET NO. 100330-WS
ORDER NO. PSC-11-0483-CFO-WS
ISSUED: October 25, 2011

ORDER GRANTING CONFIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATION FOR EXHIBIT TR-3 TO
PREFILED TESTIMONY OF AQUA UTILITIES FLORIDA, INC. WITNESS RENDELL
(DOCUMENT NO. 05647-11)

On August 10, 2011, pursuant to the provisions of Rule 25-22.006(3) and (4), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and Section 367.156, Florida Statutes (F.S.), Aqua Utilities Florida, Inc. (AUF or Utility) filed its Request for Confidential Classification of portions of Exhibit TR-3 (exhibit consists of two pages), attached to AUF witness Rendell's prefiled testimony. The Utility's request includes redacted copies for public inspection (Exhibit B, Document No. 05646-11) and copies with the sensitive material highlighted (Exhibit A, Document No. 05647-11). Document Number 05647-11 is currently held by the Commission Clerk as confidential pending resolution of AUF's request for confidential classification. None of the intervenors responded to this request.

Pursuant to Section 119.07, F.S., documents submitted to this Commission are public records. The only exceptions to this law are specific statutory exemptions and exemptions granted by governmental agencies pursuant to the specific items of a statutory provision. Subsection 367.156(3)(e), F.S., provides in pertinent part as follows:

(3) Proprietary confidential business information means information, regardless of form or characteristics, which is owned or controlled by the person or company, is intended to be and is treated by the person or company as private in that the disclosure of the information would cause harm to the ratepayers or the person's or company's business operations, and has not been disclosed unless disclosed pursuant to a statutory provision, an order of a court or administrative body, or a private agreement that provides that the information will not be released to the public. Proprietary confidential business information includes, but is not limited to:

* * *

(e) Information relating to competitive business interests, the disclosure of which would impair the competitive business of the provider of the information.

According to Section 367.156, F.S., and Rule 25-22.006, F.A.C., the utility has the burden of demonstrating that materials qualify for confidential classification, and must meet this burden by

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demonstrating that the information is proprietary confidential business information, the disclosure of which would impair or harm the competitive businesses of the utility.

Analysis of the Request

The Utility alleges that the information for which it seeks confidential classification is proprietary confidential business information consisting of a market-based, competitive compensation analysis/study (Study) regarding AUF's system operators and field technicians which contains highly proprietary confidential salary information which relates to competitive business interests, the disclosure of which would impair the competitive business of AUF. The Study "sets forth the salaries for AUF's operators and technicians employees, and benchmarks those salaries against the salaries offered by other utilities which compete in the market with AUF for those key employees." Further, as required by Section 367.156(3), F.S., and as regards the proprietary employee compensation information, the Utility states that all of the above-noted information is held by it as private, proprietary, confidential, and is not released to the public, as it could lead to other competing utility companies luring key employees away or cause infighting among its employees who have the same position but receive varying wages. AUF notes that the First District Court of Appeals "recently ruled that this type of competitively sensitive employee compensation information was proprietary confidential business information, and should be protected from public disclosure." See Florida Power & Light Company v. Public Service Commission, 31 So. 3d 860 (Fla. 1st DCA 2010). Based on the above, it appears that public disclosure of this information would harm AUF's competitive business interests and could impair the ability of the Utility to contract for employees on favorable terms. Therefore, Document No. 05647-11 shall be accorded confidential classification to the extent requested by the Utility.

According to the provisions of Section 367.156(4), F.S., absent good cause shown, confidential classification is limited to 18 months. Because the Utility has not shown good cause for a longer period, the period of confidential classification shall be set as 18 months from the date of this Order. As deemed necessary, the Utility may request an extension of the confidential classification before the period tolls. At the conclusion of the 18-month period, the confidential information will no longer be exempt from Section 119.07(1), F.S., unless AUF or another affected person shows, and the Commission finds, that the information continues to contain proprietary confidential business information. This Order shall be the only notification by the Commission to the parties concerning the expiration of the confidentiality time period.

Based on the foregoing, it is


ORDERED by Commissioner Ronald A. Brisé, as Prehearing Officer, that Aqua Utilities Florida, Inc.'s request for confidential classification of Document No. 05647-11 is granted. It is further

ORDERED that the information for which confidential classification has been requested will be granted confidential classification for a period of 18 months from the date of the issuance of this Order. It is further

ORDERED that this Order shall be the only notification by the Commission to the parties concerning the expiration of the confidentiality time period. It is further

ORDERED that the Prehearing Order shall set forth the procedures for handling confidential material, but all counsel and witnesses are cautioned to avoid verbalizing or handling confidential information in such a way that would compromise confidentiality.

By ORDER of Commissioner Ronald A. Brisé, as Prehearing Officer, this 25th day of October, 2011.


RONALD A. BRISE
Commissioner and Prehearing Officer
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
(850) 413-6770
www.floridapsc.com

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NOTICE OF FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OR JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Florida Public Service Commission is required by Section 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, to notify parties of any administrative hearing or judicial review of Commission orders that is available under Sections 120.57 or 120.68, Florida Statutes, as well as the procedures and time limits that apply. This notice should not be construed to mean all requests for an administrative hearing or judicial review will be granted or result in the relief sought.

Mediation may be available on a case-by-case basis. If mediation is conducted, it does not affect a substantially interested person's right to a hearing.

Any party adversely affected by this order, which is preliminary, procedural or intermediate in nature, may request: (1) reconsideration within 10 days pursuant to Rule 25-22.0376, Florida Administrative Code; or (2) judicial review by the Florida Supreme Court, in the case of an electric, gas or telephone utility, or the First District Court of Appeal, in the case of a water or wastewater utility. A motion for reconsideration shall be filed with the Office of Commission Clerk, in the form prescribed by Rule 25-22.0376, Florida Administrative Code. Judicial review of a preliminary, procedural or intermediate ruling or order is available if review of the final action will not provide an adequate remedy. Such review may be requested from the appropriate court, as described above, pursuant to Rule 9.100, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.