

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Application for rate increase by Florida
Public Utilities Company.

DOCKET NO. 140025-EI
ORDER NO. PSC-14-0436-CFO-EI
ISSUED: August 20, 2014

ORDER GRANTING FLORIDA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMPANY'S
REQUEST FOR CONFIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATION AND MOTION
FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE ORDER (DOCUMENT NO. 03685-14)

On July 14, 2014, pursuant to Section 366.093, Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Rule 25-22.006, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Florida Public Utilities Company (FPUC) filed its request (Request) for specified confidential classification of its responses to the Office of the Public Counsel's (OPC) Fourth Request for Production of Documents, No. 87, and OPC's Fifth Request for Production of Documents, No. 93 (Document No. 03685-14).

Request for Confidential Classification

FPUC contends that its responses to OPC's Fourth Request for Production of Documents, Nos. 87A, 87B, and 87C, as well as its responses to OPC's Fifth Request for Production of Documents, Nos. 93A, 93B, and 93C, constitute proprietary confidential business information entitled to protection under Section 366.093, F.S., and Rule 25-22.006, F.A.C.

FPUC's responses to OPC's Fourth Request for Production of Documents, Nos. 87A, 87B, and 87C, consist of Vertex Data Utility Services' (Vertex) Master Services Agreement, Vertex's statements of work addendums, and related correspondence. FPUC's responses to OPC's Fifth Request for Production of Documents, Nos. 93A, 93B, and 93C, consists of internal audit reports and internal compliance reviews of employee pricing (July 2011) and senior officer expenses (December 2012 and December 2013). FPUC asserts that the disclosure of this information could impair FPUC's ability to hire and retain key personnel. FPUC also contends that the disclosure of the specific terms and conditions of its vendor contracts could impair its ability to negotiate for similar goods and services in the future on favorable terms. Finally, FPUC asserts that all of the information produced as identified above has not been disclosed to the public and is treated by FPUC as confidential and proprietary business information.

Ruling

Section 366.093(1), F.S., provides that records the Florida Public Service Commission (Commission) has found to contain proprietary confidential business information shall be kept confidential and shall be exempt from Chapter 119, F.S. Section 366.093(3), F.S., defines proprietary confidential business information as information that is intended to be and is treated by the company as private, in that disclosure of the information would cause harm to the company's ratepayers or business operations, and that has not been voluntarily disclosed to the

public. Section 366.093(3), F.S., provides that proprietary confidential business information includes, but is not limited to:

(b) Internal auditing controls and reports of internal auditors.

(d) Information concerning bids and other contractual data, the disclosure of which would impair the efforts of the public utility or its affiliates to contract for goods and services on favorable terms.

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

Upon review, it appears the above-referenced information satisfies the criteria set forth in Sections 366.093(3)(b), (d), and (e), F.S., for classification as proprietary confidential business information. The information at issue appears to contain internal audits, employee-specific expense information, and contractual information, the disclosure of which could impair the utility's ability to contract for goods and services on favorable terms in the future. Thus, the information identified in Document No. 03685-14, as set forth herein, shall be granted confidential classification.

Pursuant to Section 366.093(4), F.S., the information for which confidential classification is granted herein shall remain protected from disclosure for a period of up to 18 months from the date of the issuance of this Order. At the conclusion of this period, the confidential information will no longer be exempt from Section 119.07(1), F.S., unless FPUC or another affected person shows, and the Commission finds, that the records continue to contain proprietary confidential business information.

Motion for Temporary Protective Order

FPUC also seeks protection of the documents as provided in Section 366.093(2), F.S., and Rule 25-22.006(6), F.A.C., while the material is in the possession of OPC. Section 366.093(2), F.S., directs that all records produced pursuant to a discovery request for which proprietary confidential status is requested shall be treated by any party subject to the public records law as confidential and exempt from the public records law, Section 119.07(1), F.S. Rule 25-22.006(6), F.A.C., codifies the Commission's policy regarding the protection of confidential information from public disclosure during the discovery process in a manner that is not overly burdensome to both parties. Rule 25-22.006(6)(a), F.A.C., in pertinent part, states:

In any formal proceeding before the Commission, any utility or other person may request a protective order protecting proprietary confidential business information from discovery. Upon a showing by a utility or other person and a finding by the Commission that the material is entitled to protection, the Commission shall enter a protective order limiting discovery in the manner provided for in Rule 1.280, Florida Rules of Civil Procedure.

In addition, Rule 25-22.006(6)(c), F.A.C., states that if a party allows OPC to inspect or take possession of utility information, then that "utility may request a temporary protective order exempting the information from section 119.07(1), F.S."

Upon consideration of FPUC's assertions of the confidential nature of the information contained in its responses to OPC's Fourth Request for Production of Documents, Nos. 87A, 87B, and 87C, and OPC's Fifth Request for Production of Documents, Nos. 93A, 93B, and 93C, FPUC's Motion for Temporary Protective Order is hereby granted. As a result, this information shall be protected from disclosure pursuant to Rule 25-22.006(6)(c), F.A.C.

Based on the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED by Commissioner Julie I. Brown, as Prehearing Officer, that Florida Public Utilities Company's Request for Confidential Classification of the materials contained in Document No. 03685-14 is granted, as set forth herein. It is further

ORDERED that the information in Document No. 03685-14 for which confidential classification has been granted, shall remain protected from disclosure for a period of up to 18 months from the date of issuance of this Order. It is further

ORDERED that Florida Public Utilities Company's Motion for Temporary Protective Order regarding the materials contained in Document No. 03685-14 is granted. It is further

ORDERED that this Order shall be the only notification by the Commission to the parties of the date of declassification of the materials discussed herein.

By ORDER of Commissioner Julie I. Brown, as Prehearing Officer, this 20th day of August, 2014.



JULIE I. BROWN

Commissioner and Prehearing Officer
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Copies furnished: A copy of this document is provided to the parties of record at the time of issuance and, if applicable, interested persons.

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.