

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**

CM #18-08

March 7, 2018

2:02 ~ 2:27 P.M.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Swain E. WHITFIELD, *Chairman*; Comer H. ‘Randy’ RANDALL, *Vice Chairman*; and COMMISSIONERS John E. ‘Butch’ HOWARD, Elliott F. ELAM, Jr., Elizabeth B. ‘Lib’ FLEMING, Robert T. ‘Bob’ BOCKMAN, and G. O’Neal HAMILTON

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: —

ADVISOR TO COMMISSION: Joseph Melchers, Esq.
GENERAL COUNSEL

PRESENTING AGENDA: James Spearman, Ph.D.
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO COMMISSIONERS

STAFF PRESENT: F. David Butler, Esq., Senior Counsel; B. Randall Dong, Esq., Josh Minges, Esq., and David W. Stark, III, Esq., Legal Advisory Staff; Janice Schmieding and Patricia Stephens, Clerk’s Staff; and Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC, Court Reporter.

**TRANSCRIPT / MINUTES
OF
COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING**

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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COLUMBIA, SC 29210

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In accordance with S.C. Code § 30-4-80(E), the Public Service Commission hereby certifies that it has notified all persons, organizations, local news media, and all other news media requesting notification of the time, date, place, and agenda of this public meeting, by posting a copy of the Notice in its principal office, by e-mailing such Notice to all who request same, and by posting the Notice on the Commission's official Internet website.

P R O C E E D I N G S

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2 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Please be seated. I will
3 call this Commission Meeting to order, and let's
4 pause for a moment of silent meditation.

5 [Brief pause]

6 Amen.

7 Dr. Spearman.

8 **DR. SPEARMAN:** Mr. Chairman and Commissioners,
9 our first order of business would be to set the
10 next Commission Meeting. If we stay on our
11 schedule, it would be on Wednesday, March 14th, at
12 2 in the afternoon.

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Sounds good, Dr.
14 Spearman.

15 **DR. SPEARMAN:** Mr. Chairman and Commissioners,
16 on the Utility Agenda, Item 1, Docket No. 2017-362-
17 C, the Troy LaColla Complaint, we have a Motion to
18 Dismiss.

19 **COMMISSIONER ELAM:** Mr. Chairman?

20 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioner Elam.

21 **COMMISSIONER ELAM:** Mr. Chairman, I'm going to
22 move that we grant the Motion to Dismiss. Frontier
23 offers basic telecommunications service to the
24 LaColla residence, but not broadband. AT&T does
25 not have the carrier-of-last-resort
26 responsibilities for the residence and does not
27 currently plan to offer broadband services. But
28 Frontier and AT&T have, together, investigated ways
29 to provide alternatives to Mr. LaColla, and have
30 discovered that wireless broadband is available.
31 Mr. LaColla has not challenged any violation of the
32 Commission's Rules and Regulations and, for that

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reason, I move that we dismiss the Complaint.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Elam.

Commissioners, you've heard Commissioner Elam's motion. Is there any discussion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 2, Docket No. 2018-35-C, the North American Numbering Plan Administrator – NANPA – is requesting cancellation of hearing and waiver of publication. This matter deals with the exhaustion of the 803 area code numbers projected for 2020, and the proposed solution is an overlay.

COMMISSIONER ELAM: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Elam.

COMMISSIONER ELAM: I move that we deny the request to waive the notice and hold in abeyance the request to cancel hearing until the end of the intervention period. Petitioner, meanwhile, should retain South Carolina counsel to go forward with this Petition. So moved.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Elam.

Commissioners, you've heard Commissioner Elam's motion in Item 2. Are there any questions of Commissioner Elam or any discussion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

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COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 3 consists of two dockets: Docket No. 2016-41-E and 2016-42-E. These are Progress Energy requesting acceptance for filing of purchased-power agreements and confidential treatment of portions of those agreements. The Office of Regulatory Staff had objected to confidential treatment.

COMMISSIONER BOCKMAN: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Bockman, before I entertain a motion on this item, Dr. Spearman, let the record show that I will not be voting. I was out on family sick leave, and I will not be voting on this item.

Commissioner Bockman.

COMMISSIONER BOCKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a motion I'd like to offer, if I might, and I will apologize in advance; it's somewhat lengthy and there are some statutory references in it, and I'll try to speak distinctly so that all of you can follow me.

The issue before us in these two dockets concerns a dispute between Duke Energy Progress, LLC, and the Office of Regulatory Staff over the confidential treatment of information contained in utility-scale solar purchased-power agreements.

Duke asserts that these agreements contain competitively sensitive information that is not subject to disclosure under Section 30-4-40(a)(1)

1 of the Freedom of Information Act. The company
2 claims that competition in the utility-scale solar
3 market makes the negotiated terms of purchased-
4 power agreements valuable to solar companies
5 wishing to interconnect to its electric grid, and
6 that costs to ratepayers are reduced by keeping
7 this information confidential when individual solar
8 companies must negotiate without the advantage of
9 knowing the terms of other agreements. In other
10 words, the confidentiality of the agreements' terms
11 protects the company's ability to negotiate and
12 reduces costs to ratepayers. Examples of
13 confidential terms in the agreements provided by
14 Duke include such things as the commercial
15 operating date and liquidated damages provisions.

16 ORS maintains that customers have a right to
17 see the information because the utility will seek
18 to recover its solar costs from ratepayers. It
19 states that the Commission's statutory provision
20 regarding confidentiality at Section 58-4-55(C)
21 only applies to uncontested proceedings and is not
22 relevant here, since ORS is challenging
23 confidentiality. Instead, ORS contends the
24 prevailing statute that applies in this instance is
25 under Freedom of Information Act Section 30-4-
26 40(a)(5) regarding a public body's discretion to
27 exempt information from disclosure when it pertains
28 to documents incidental to proposed contract
29 arrangements or information used in negotiating
30 contracts. Under this theory, ORS concludes that
31 insufficient support for confidentiality exists,
32 since the agreements at issue are completed and

1 therefore not proposed or in the negotiation
2 process.

3 ORS also argues that, regardless of the rule
4 we adopt to govern disclosure of these purchase
5 power agreements, the burden is on the utility to
6 prove confidentiality. To make this point, ORS
7 states that South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure
8 41.1(7) places the burden on the utility to show
9 there is a legitimate and compelling reason to keep
10 the information from the public and this reason
11 outweighs the public interest in favor of
12 disclosure.

13 I disagree with ORS. Section 58-4-55(C)
14 applies in this instance and explains the specific
15 procedure for dealing with the confidentiality
16 issue raised by ORS. Since these agreements are
17 merely accepted for filing under Order No. 1981-214
18 and are not originally contested, I do not believe
19 that challenging the confidentiality of a power
20 purchase agreement causes the subject matter of the
21 underlying docket to become a contested proceeding.
22 This statute is intended to govern how a utility,
23 ORS, and the Commission interact with confidential
24 information in an uncontested setting and
25 specifically provides a path for ORS to object to
26 confidential treatment. If an objection by ORS
27 caused the underlying subject matter to become,
28 quote, "contested," unquote, pursuant to Section
29 58-4-55(C), the statute would be internally
30 inconsistent; however, principles of statutory
31 construction require this Commission to interpret
32 the statute so as to avoid such a result.

1 As I read Section 58-4-55(C), once a utility
2 provides ORS with information that it designates as
3 confidential, it is ORS's burden to petition the
4 Commission for an order that some or all of it is
5 not entitled to protection from public disclosure.
6 Only then is it incumbent on the utility to prove
7 that such information is entitled to protection.
8 Unless the Commission's order on such a petition
9 contains a finding to the contrary, all documents
10 or information designated as confidential or
11 proprietary pursuant to this subsection are exempt
12 from public disclosure under the provisions of the
13 Freedom of Information Act.

14 As such, I move that the Commission find that
15 the redacted material in the purchased-power
16 agreements at issue is entitled to protection under
17 30-4-40(a)(1) cited by the utility. The material
18 is competitively sensitive and could prevent the
19 company from negotiating contracts which are more
20 favorable to the company and, as a result, more
21 favorable to ratepayers. A solar developer will
22 seek to charge a high cost for power to maximize
23 its gains, while the utility will seek to pay a low
24 cost for power. The utility customer will be
25 charged whatever rate is negotiated. It is not in
26 the public interest to limit a company's ability to
27 negotiate better contract terms for purchased-power
28 agreements.

29 Next, I find that ORS's reliance on Freedom of
30 Information Act Section 30-4-40(a)(5) is misplaced.
31 This statute does not rule out confidentiality once
32 information is no longer incidental to proposed

1 contract arrangements and contract negotiation is
2 completed by a finalized agreement. This provision
3 simply no longer applies once formation of the
4 contract is complete. Further, all documents or
5 information designated as confidential or
6 proprietary pursuant to Section 58-4-55(C) are
7 specifically exempt from public disclosure under
8 the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.
9 Therefore, upon such a finding by the Commission,
10 30-4-40(a)(5) is simply not a relevant standard.

11 Further, when examining Rule 41.1(b), it
12 becomes clear that Rule 41.1 only applies if Rule
13 26(b)(5), regarding the exchange of information
14 between parties in the context of civil litigation,
15 is inapplicable and if there is no other governing
16 law. Rule 26(b)(5) does not apply in
17 administrative proceedings before the Commission,
18 and therefore I find it is inapplicable in this
19 context. The Commission's statute, Section 58-4-
20 55(C) is the, quote, "other governing law,"
21 unquote, in this matter, therefore making Rule 41.1
22 similarly inapplicable to the question before us.
23 The specific provisions of 58-4-55(C) govern the
24 result here, not civil procedure rules.

25 In summary, Section 58-4-55(C) is specific to
26 practice before the Commission and governs in this
27 case, instead of the more generally applicable
28 Section 30-4-40(a)(5) of the Freedom of Information
29 Act or Rule 41.1(7) of the South Carolina Rules of
30 Civil Procedure. In the circumstance where the
31 Commission accepts these purchased-power agreements
32 for filing and the matter is thus uncontested, this

1 ruling maintains that the burden is on ORS to
2 object to confidential treatment when it believes
3 that such information is not entitled to protection
4 from public disclosure. It then becomes the
5 utility's burden to rebut that position. If the
6 Commission is persuaded by the utility's arguments,
7 the material over which the utility claimed
8 confidentiality remains protected. Absent an order
9 to the contrary, all documents or information
10 designated as confidential or proprietary pursuant
11 to this subsection are exempt from public
12 disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act
13 provisions.

14 Accordingly, in the Dockets before the
15 Commission, I am persuaded by the utility's
16 arguments and, therefore, I move that the
17 Commission accept the purchased-power agreements
18 for filing, and grant confidential treatment to the
19 provisions of the agreements designated by the
20 company as confidential.

21 And I so move, Mr. Chairman.

22 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner
23 Bockman.

24 Commissioners, you've heard Commissioner
25 Bockman's motion. Is there any discussion?

26 **COMMISSIONER ELAM:** Mr. Chairman?

27 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioner Elam.

28 **COMMISSIONER ELAM:** Mr. Chairman, although I
29 believe this is not the most clear-cut case in the
30 world, I will support Commissioner Bockman's
31 motion. The parties have followed the correct
32 procedure set forth in the statute. Duke requested

1 the confidential treatment, ORS properly filed its
2 objection, and all the parties have had their right
3 to be heard. Under Section 58-4-55(C), Duke has
4 the burden to prove the materials are entitled to
5 protection. They have said it could force higher
6 purchased-power costs that would be passed on to
7 ratepayers. ORS did not dispute that. ORS argued
8 that the Commission should not protect the contract
9 amendments as a matter of law and/or policy
10 pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. They
11 also noted that SCE&G does not consider these
12 amendments to be confidential as of – within the
13 last couple of years.

14 Going forward, perhaps the experience of SCE&G
15 will provide better information as to the effect
16 that non-confidentiality has on these kind of
17 provisions. I fully appreciate and agree with the
18 need for transparency in ratemaking, but, for now,
19 I will vote to approve Commissioner Bockman's
20 motion to prioritize the rates consumers pay for
21 electricity. New evidence from SCE&G's experience,
22 or otherwise, if that new evidence becomes
23 available, I believe this Commission can revisit
24 this issue. For now, I trust that ORS's access to
25 such information will protect the public interest.
26 Much like the 1994 *Hamm versus SCE&G* case that the
27 company cites, I believe this represents a fair
28 balancing of interests in this matter.

29 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner
30 Elam.

31 Are there any other questions for Commissioner
32 Bockman or is there any other discussion of his

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motion? Commissioner Fleming.

COMMISSIONER FLEMING: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am a firm believer in being as transparent as possible, but I do believe that there are times when confidentiality is necessary: It's necessary in negotiations and, as we've heard, it can even serve the public interest, and even to the point of lowering rates for the customers of these entities. So I am in support of this. There are avenues or regulations on the books that people can go through the process to challenge the confidentiality, and so, with all of those safeguards in place, I am in support of this motion, as well.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Fleming.

Any further discussion or questions regarding Commissioner Bockman's motion?

[No response]

Hearing none, I'm going to call for the question. All those in favor of Commissioner Bockman's motion, at this time, please, say "aye."

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries, with one abstention: mine.
Dr. Spearman.

DR. SPEARMAN: Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, in Item 4, the Petition to Intervene has been withdrawn and there's no Commission action required.

Items 5 and 6 are Petitions to Intervene in Docket No. 2017-30_[sic]-E. No. 5 is a Petition to

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Intervene by the City of Orangeburg and No. 6 is a Petition to Intervene on behalf of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. We can take these together or separately.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Howard.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Thank you. I'll take them together. In Docket No. 2017-370-E, grant the Petition to Intervene on behalf of the City of Orangeburg and also on behalf of South Carolina Coastal Conservation League and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. So moved, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Howard.

Commissioners, you've heard Commissioner Howard's motion regarding Items 5 and 6. Is there any discussion or any questions of Commissioner Howard, regarding his motion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor of Commissioner Howard's motion, please, say "aye."

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

Dr. Spearman.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 7, again, Docket No. 2017-370-E, we have a Motion for Admission Pro Hac Vice of Lisa S. Booth, Joseph K. Reid, III, Ellen T. Ruff, and Elaine S. Ryan.

COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Mr. Chairman.

1 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioner Hamilton.

2 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Mr. Chairman, I would
3 move to grant the Motion for Admission Pro Hac Vice
4 of the petitioning attorneys in Docket No. 2017-
5 370-E. So moved, sir.

6 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner
7 Hamilton.

8 You've heard Commissioner Hamilton's motion.
9 Is there any discussion?

10 [No response]

11 If not, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

12 **COMMISSIONERS:** Aye.

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Any opposed?

14 [No response]

15 Motion carries.

16 Dr. Spearman.

17 **DR. SPEARMAN:** Item 8, Docket No. 2018-15-W,
18 the Joint Application of Water Head, LLC, and
19 Sliding Rock Water Systems for the transfer and
20 sale of utility assets of Water Head, LLC, being
21 transferred to Sliding Rock Water Systems.

22 **VICE CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Mr. Chairman.

23 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioner Randall.

24 **VICE CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Mr. Chairman, I move
25 that we grant the approval of the sale and transfer
26 of Water Head, LLC, utility assets to Sliding Rock
27 Water System, LLC. Upon transfer, Sliding Rock
28 Water System, LLC, will charge customers for water
29 service at the current Water Head rate unless or
30 until the Commission approves otherwise. Sliding
31 Rock will post the required performance bond within
32 30 days of completion of the sale and transfer, and

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ORS does not oppose this filing.

So moved, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you.

You've heard Commissioner Randall's motion.

Is there any discussion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 9, Docket No. 2016-384-S, the Application of Moore Sewer, we have a request for a public night hearing in Spartanburg, filed by a number of customers.

COMMISSIONER FLEMING: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Fleming.

COMMISSIONER FLEMING: In Order 2018-122, this Commission has already directed staff to schedule a night hearing in the Spartanburg area, and I invite all of the requestors and any other customer and people who are interested to attend that hearing.
So moved.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Fleming.

You've heard Commissioner Fleming's motion in this matter. Is there any discussion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor of Commissioner Fleming's motion, please, say "aye."

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

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[No response]

Motion carries.

Dr. Spearman, we're back to you.

DR. SPEARMAN: Mr. Chairman and Commissioners,
that completes the Utility Agenda.

On the Transportation Agenda, Items 1 and 2
are Applications for Class C Certificates. Item 3
is also an application; however, we ask to carry
that one over. The Applicant has requested a name
change on the Application. Items 5, 6, 7, and 8
are also Applications for Class C Certificates. We
can take these separately or as a group.

COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Hamilton.

COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Mr. Chairman, I'm
going to move this as a group, and I would move at
this time that we approve the new Applications in
Items 1 and 2, and 4 through 8. So moved, Mr.
Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner
Hamilton.

You've heard Commissioner Hamilton's motion
regarding Items 1, 2, and then 4 through 8. As Dr.
Spearman noted, we'll be carrying Item 3 over. So
is there any discussion regarding Commissioner
Hamilton's motion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor of Commissioner
Hamilton's motion, please, say "aye."

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

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Motion carries.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 9, Docket No. 2018-48-T, Kostandin Laska requesting to amend Certificate for a name change.

VICE CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Randall.

VICE CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Mr. Chairman, I move that we grant the request of Kostandin Laska to amend the Class C (Taxi) Certificate to read "Kostandin Laska, doing business as Royal Cab." So moved.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Randall.

You've heard Commissioner Randall's motion. Is there any discussion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

Dr. Spearman.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 10, Docket No. 2017-261-T, Penny Dixon, doing business as T-Way Transportation, requesting an extension of time.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Howard.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: In Docket No. 2017-261-T, I move we grant the request of Penny Dixon, d/b/a T-Way Transportation, for an extension of time until June 12, 2018, to comply with Commission Rules and Regulations. So moved, Mr. Chairman.

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CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Howard.

You've heard Commissioner Howard's motion. Is there any discussion?

[No response]

If not, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

DR. SPEARMAN: Item 11, Docket No. 2009-365-T, Bill R. Burch, doing business as Carolina Easy Ride, requesting cancellation of Certificate.

COMMISSIONER FLEMING: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Fleming.

COMMISSIONER FLEMING: In Docket No. 2009-365-T, I move to grant the request of Bill R. Burch, doing business as Carolina Easy Ride, to cancel their Class C Charter Bus Certificate No. 0284.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner Fleming.

You've heard Commissioner Fleming's motion. Is there any discussion?

[No response]

Hearing none, all those in favor, please, say "aye"?

COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Any opposed?

[No response]

Motion carries.

DR. SPEARMAN: Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, that completes the business agenda for today. I

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will bring your attention to the fact that we have a hearing following this meeting.

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Dr. Spearman.

We're going to take a brief break to get set up for our next hearing, and meeting adjourned.

[WHEREUPON, at 2:27 p.m., the proceedings in the above-entitled matter were adjourned.]



Date: 3/8/18

Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC
Court Reporter ~ Public Service Commission of South Carolina
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