

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF THE REVIEW OF THE
DISTRIBUTION INVESTMENT RIDER
CONTAINED IN THE TARIFF OF OHIO
POWER COMPANY.

CASE NO. 21-16-EL-RDR

ENTRY

Entered in the Journal on March 24, 2021

I. SUMMARY

{¶ 1} The Commission selects Blue Ridge Consulting Services, Inc. to conduct the audit services necessary to assist the Commission with the audit of Ohio Power Company d/b/a AEP Ohio's distribution investment rider.

II. DISCUSSION

{¶ 2} Ohio Power Company d/b/a AEP Ohio (AEP Ohio) is an electric distribution utility as defined in R.C. 4928.01(A)(6) and a public utility as defined in R.C. 4905.02, and, as such, is subject to the jurisdiction of this Commission.

{¶ 3} R.C. 4928.141 provides that an electric distribution utility shall provide consumers within its certified territory a standard service offer (SSO) of all competitive retail electric services necessary to maintain essential electric services to customers, including a firm supply of electric generation services. The SSO may be either a market rate offer in accordance with R.C. 4928.142 or an electric security plan (ESP) in accordance with R.C. 4928.143.

{¶ 4} On August 8, 2012, the Commission issued its Opinion and Order in Case No. 11-346-EL-SSO, et al., which approved, with certain modifications, AEP Ohio's application for an ESP, effective with the first billing cycle of September 2012 through May 31, 2015. *In re Columbus Southern Power Co. and Ohio Power Co.*, Case No. 11-346-EL-SSO, et al. (ESP 2 Case), Opinion and Order (Aug. 8, 2012). Among other provisions of the ESP, the Commission modified and approved AEP Ohio's proposed distribution investment rider (DIR) to allow for the recovery of capital costs for distribution infrastructure investments in

order to facilitate improved service reliability. Additionally, the Commission required that the DIR be reviewed annually for accounting accuracy and prudence. *ESP 2 Case* at 46-47.

{¶ 5} In Case No. 13-2385-EL-SSO, et al., the Commission modified and approved an ESP for AEP Ohio, including modification and approval of continuation of the DIR, for the period of June 1, 2015, through May 31, 2018. *In re Ohio Power Co.*, Case No. 13-2385-EL-SSO, et al., Opinion and Order (Feb. 25, 2015) at 45-47, Second Entry on Rehearing (May 28, 2015) at 23-24, Fourth Entry on Rehearing (Nov. 3, 2016) at 50-51.

{¶ 6} In Case No. 16-1852-EL-SSO, et al., the Commission modified and approved AEP Ohio's ESP, pursuant to a stipulation and recommendation, for the period of June 1, 2018, through May 31, 2024, including the continuation of the DIR subject to certain conditions. *In re Ohio Power Co.*, Case No. 16-1852-EL-SSO, et al., Opinion and Order (Apr. 25, 2018) at ¶ 46.

{¶ 7} On February 10, 2021, the Commission issued an Entry directing Staff to issue a request for proposal (RFP) for the audit services necessary to assist the Commission with its audit of AEP Ohio's DIR costs for 2020. Prospective bidders were directed to submit proposals to Staff by March 12, 2021. Interested bidders were also directed to demonstrate their understanding of the project and the work required by showing a clear understanding of the tasks to be completed, the experience and qualifications of the personnel who will perform the work, and the anticipated breakdown of costs and timing.

{¶ 8} The proposals received in response to the RFP have been evaluated and, after consideration of those proposals, the Commission selects Blue Ridge Consulting Services, Inc. (Blue Ridge). The Commission finds that Blue Ridge has the necessary experience to complete the required work.

{¶ 9} AEP Ohio shall enter into a contract with Blue Ridge by April 7, 2021, for the purpose of providing payment for its auditing services. The contract shall incorporate the

terms and conditions of the RFP, the auditor's proposal, and relevant Commission entries in this case.

{¶ 10} The Commission shall solely direct the work of the auditor. Staff will review and approve payment invoices submitted by the auditor.

{¶ 11} Blue Ridge will execute its duties pursuant to the Commission's statutory authority to investigate and acquire records, contracts, reports, and other documentation under R.C. 4903.02, 4903.03, 4905.06, 4905.15, and 4905.16. Blue Ridge is subject to the Commission's statutory duty under R.C. 4901.16, which provides:

Except in his report to the public utilities commission or when called on to testify in any court or proceeding of the public utilities commission, no employee or agent referred to in section 4905.13 of the Revised Code shall divulge any information acquired by him in respect to the transaction, property, or business of any public utility, while acting or claiming to act as such employee or agent. Whoever violates this section shall be disqualified from acting as agent, or acting in any other capacity under the appointment or employment of the commission.

{¶ 12} Upon request of Blue Ridge or Staff, AEP Ohio shall provide any and all documents or information requested. AEP Ohio may conspicuously mark such documents or information "confidential" if AEP Ohio believes the document should be deemed as such. In no event, however, shall AEP Ohio refuse or delay in providing such documents or information.

{¶ 13} Once disclosure is permitted by R.C. 4901.16, the following process applies to the release of any document or information marked as confidential. Three days' prior notice of intent to disclose shall be provided to the party claiming confidentiality. Three days after such notice, Staff or the auditor may disclose or otherwise make use of such documents or

information for any lawful purpose, unless the Commission receives a request for a protective order pertaining to such documents or information within the three-day notice period. The three-day notice period will be computed according to Ohio Adm.Code 4901-1-07.

{¶ 14} Blue Ridge shall perform its audit and investigation as an independent contractor. Any conclusions, results, or recommendations formulated by Blue Ridge may be examined by any participant to this proceeding. Further, it shall be understood that the Commission and/or its Staff shall not be liable for any acts committed by Blue Ridge or its agents in the preparation and presentation of the report.

III. ORDER

{¶ 15} It is, therefore,

{¶ 16} ORDERED, That Blue Ridge be selected to perform the consulting activities set forth above and in the RFP. It is, further,

{¶ 17} ORDERED, That AEP Ohio and Blue Ridge shall observe the requirements set forth herein. It is, further,

{¶ 18} ORDERED, That a copy of this Entry be served upon all parties of record.

COMMISSIONERS:

Approving:

M. Beth Trombold
Lawrence K. Friedeman
Daniel R. Conway
Dennis P. Deters

SJP/mef

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Case No(s). 21-0016-EL-RDR

Summary: Entry selecting Blue Ridge Consulting Services, Inc. to conduct the audit services necessary to assist the Commission with the audit of Ohio Power Company d/b/a AEP Ohio's distribution investment rider. electronically filed by Kelli C. King on behalf of The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio