**BEFORE THE**

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, :

Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement :

: v. : C-2020-3017229

:

Verde Energy USA, Inc. :

**ORDER GRANTING MOTION FOR PROTECTIVE ORDER**

On October 30, 2020, the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) filed a Motion for Protective Order (Motion) pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §§ 5.362(a)(7) and 5.365(a) in the above captioned proceeding. In support of its Motion, the OCA averred that through the course of the investigation, formal and informal discovery information has been exchanged which has been marked Confidential or Proprietary in accordance with the Protective Agreement entered into by the parties. OCA Motion at 2, ¶ 8. In further support of its Motion, OCA asserted:

The attached suggested Protective Order will protect the Proprietary or Confidential nature of the information that has been exchanged and marked as such while allowing the parties to use such information for purposes of the instant litigation if necessary. The proposed Protective Order applies the least restrictive means of limitation that will provide the necessary protections from disclosure.

OCA Motion at 2, ¶ 9. Moreover, I note that the language of the proposed Protective Order provides as follows:

That the parties shall retain the right to question or challenge the confidential or proprietary nature of Proprietary Information and to question or challenge the admissibility of Proprietary Information. If a party challenges the designation of a document or information as proprietary, the party providing the information retains the burden of demonstrating that the designation is appropriate.

OCA Proposed Protective Order at ¶ 21.

The OCA indicated that it had consulted with all other active parties to this proceeding (I&E and Verde) and neither of them have an objection. As there are no objections, I will grant OCA’s Motion for Protective Order filed on October 30, 2020.

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. The Motion is hereby granted with respect to all materials and information identified in Paragraph 3 below.
2. That the materials subject to this Protective Order are all correspondence, documents, data, information, studies, methodologies and other materials, furnished in this proceeding, which are believed by the producing party to be of a proprietary or confidential nature and which are so designated by being stamped “Proprietary” or “Confidential.” Such materials will be referred to below as “Proprietary Information.”
3. That the parties have and may designate as “Confidential” or “Proprietary” those materials which customarily are treated by that party as sensitive or proprietary, which are not available to the public or which, if disclosed freely, would subject that party or others to risk of competitive disadvantage or other business injury.
4. That Proprietary Information shall be made available to counsel for the non-producing party, subject to the terms of this Protective Order. Such counsel shall use or disclose the Proprietary Information only for purposes of preparing or presenting evidence, cross examination, argument, or settlement discussions in this proceeding. To the extent required for participation in this proceeding, counsel for a non-producing party may afford access to Proprietary Information subject to the conditions set forth herein.
5. Proprietary Information produced in this proceeding shall be made available to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) and its Staff. For purposes of filing, to the extent that Proprietary Information is placed in the Commission’s report folders, such information shall be handled in accordance with routine Commission procedures inasmuch as the report folders are not subject to public disclosure. To the extent that Proprietary Information is placed in the Commission’s testimony or document folders, such information shall be separately bound, conspicuously marked, and accompanied by a copy of this Protective Order. Public inspection of Protected Information shall be permitted only in accordance with this Protective Order.
6. That “Confidential” information may be made available to a “Reviewing Representative” who is a person who has signed a Non-Disclosure Certificate in the form attached as **Appendix A** hereto and who is: (i) an attorney for one of the parties who has entered an appearance in this proceeding; (ii) an attorney, paralegal, or other employee associated for purposes of this proceeding with an attorney described in subparagraph (i); (iii) an expert or an employee of an expert retained by a party for the purpose of advising, preparing for or testifying in this proceeding; or (iv) an employee or other representative of a party with significant responsibility in this proceeding.
7. Provided, however, that no Reviewing Representative may be a “Restricted Person.” For the purpose of this Protective Order, “Restricted Person” shall mean: (i) an officer, director, stockholder, partner, or owner of any competitor of a party to this Protective Order or an employee of such an entity if the employee’s duties involve marketing or pricing of the competitor’s products or services; (ii) an officer, director, stockholder, partner, or owner of any affiliate of a competitor of a party to this Protective Order (including any association of competitors of a party) or an employee of such an entity if the employee’s duties involve marketing or pricing of the competitor’s products or services; (iii) an officer, director, stockholder, owner or employee of a competitor of a customer of a party to this Protective Order if the Proprietary Information concerns any specific, identifiable customer of a party; and (iv) an officer, director, stockholder, owner or employee of an affiliate of a competitor of a customer of a party to this Protective Order if the Proprietary Information concerns a specific, identifiable customer of the party; provided, however, that no expert shall be disqualified on account of being a stockholder, partner, or owner unless that expert’s interest in the business would provide a significant motive for violation of the limitations of permissible use of the Proprietary Information. For purposes of this Protective Order, stocks, partnership or other ownership interests valued at more than $10,000 or constituting more than a 1 percent interest in a business establishes a significant motive for violation.
8. If an expert for a party to this Protective Order, another member of the expert’s firm or the expert’s firm also serves as an expert for, or as a consultant or advisor to, a Restricted Person, said expert must: (i) identify for the other party to this Protective Order each Restricted Person and each expert or consultant; (ii) make reasonable attempts to segregate those personnel assisting in the expert’s participation in this proceeding from those personnel working on behalf of a Restricted Person; and (iii) if segregation of such personnel is impractical, the expert shall give to the producing party written assurances that the lack of segregation will in no way jeopardize the interests of the party or its customers. The parties retain the right to challenge the adequacy of the written assurances that the parties or their customers’ interests will not be jeopardized.
9. If any person who has had access to Proprietary Information subsequently is assigned to perform any duties which would make that person ineligible to be a Reviewing Representative of “Confidential” information, that person shall immediately inform the producing party of his or her new duties, shall dispose of any Proprietary Information and any information derived therefrom in his or her possession and shall continue to comply with the requirements of this Protective Order with regard to the Proprietary Information to which that person previously had access.
10. That no other persons may have access to the Proprietary Information except as authorized by order of the Commission or the Presiding Administrative Law Judge.
11. That Proprietary Information shall be treated by non-producing parties subject to this Protective Order and by all Reviewing Representatives in accordance with the certificate attached as **Appendix A** and executed pursuant to Paragraph 13. Information deemed Proprietary Information shall not be used except as necessary for the conduct of this proceeding, nor shall it be disclosed in any manner to any person except a Reviewing Representative who is engaged in the conduct of this proceeding and who needs to know the information in order to carry out that person’s responsibilities in this proceeding.
12. That Reviewing Representatives may not use information contained in any Proprietary Information obtained through this proceeding to give any commercial advantage. If a party wishes to designate as a Reviewing Representative a person not described in Paragraph 6 above, the party shall seek agreement from the party providing the Proprietary Information. If an agreement is reached, that person shall be a Reviewing Representative with respect to those materials. If no agreement is reached, the party shall submit the disputed designation to the presiding Administrative Law Judge for resolution.
13. That a Reviewing Representative shall not be permitted to inspect, participate in discussions regarding, or otherwise be permitted access to Proprietary Information pursuant to this Protective Order unless that Reviewing Representative has first executed a Non-Disclosure Certificate provided that if an attorney qualified as a Reviewing Representative has executed such a certificate, the agents, paralegals, secretarial and clerical personnel under the attorney’s instruction, supervision or control need not do so. A copy of each Non-Disclosure Certificate shall be provided to counsel for the party asserting confidentiality prior to disclosure of any Proprietary Information to that Reviewing Representative.
14. That attorneys and outside experts qualified as Reviewing Representatives are responsible for ensuring that persons under their supervision or control comply with this Protective Order.
15. That none of the parties waive their right to pursue any other legal or equitable remedies that may be available in the event of actual or anticipated disclosure of Proprietary Information.
16. That the producing party shall designate data or documents as constituting or containing Proprietary Information by stamping the documents “Proprietary” or “Confidential.” Where only part of data compilations or multi-page documents constitutes or contains Proprietary Information, the parties, insofar as reasonably practicable within discovery and other time constraints imposed in this proceeding, shall designate only the specific data or pages of documents which constitute or contain Proprietary Information. The Proprietary Information shall be served in an envelope separate from the nonproprietary materials, and the envelope shall be conspicuously marked “Proprietary” or “Confidential.”
17. That the non-producing party will consider and treat the Proprietary Information as within the definition of “confidential information” in Section 102 of the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law of 2008, 65 P.S. § 67.102 and subject to exemptions from disclosure as provided for in Section 708 of the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law of 2008, 65 P.S. § 67.708, until the information is found by a tribunal with jurisdiction to be not confidential or subject to one or more exemptions.
18. That any public reference to Proprietary Information by a party shall be to the title or exhibit reference in sufficient detail to permit persons with access to the Proprietary Information to understand fully the reference and not more. The Proprietary Information shall remain a part of the record, to the extent admitted, for all purposes of administrative or judicial review.
19. That, when a statement or exhibit is identified for the record, the portions thereof that constitute Proprietary Information shall be designated as such for the record.
20. That any part of the record of this proceeding containing Proprietary Information, including but not limited to all exhibits, writings, testimony, cross examination and argument, and including reference thereto as mentioned in Paragraph 18 above, shall be sealed for all purposes, including administrative and judicial review, unless such Proprietary Information is released from the restrictions of this Protective Order, either through the agreement of the parties to this Protective Order or pursuant to an order of the Commission.
21. That the parties shall retain the right to question or challenge the confidential or proprietary nature of Proprietary Information and to question or challenge the admissibility of Proprietary Information. If a party challenges the designation of a document or information as proprietary, the party providing the information retains the burden of demonstrating that the designation is appropriate.
22. That the parties shall retain the right to object to the production of Proprietary Information on any proper ground; to refuse to produce Proprietary Information pending the adjudication of the objection; and to seek additional measures of protection of Proprietary Information beyond those provided in this Protective Order.
23. That within 30 days after a Commission final order is entered in the above-captioned proceeding, or in the event of appeals, within 30 days after appeals are finally decided, the non-producing party, upon request, shall either destroy or return to the producing party all copies of all documents and other materials not entered into the record, including notes, which contain any Proprietary Information. In the event that the non-producing party elects to destroy all copies of documents and other materials containing Proprietary Information instead of returning the copies of documents and other materials containing Proprietary Information to the producing party, the non-producing party shall certify in writing to the other party that the Proprietary Information has been destroyed.

Date: November 5, 2020

Christopher P. Pell

Deputy Chief Administrative Law Judge

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement v. Verde Energy USA, Inc.

Docket Number C-2020-3017229

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**APPENDIX A**

**APPENDIX A**

**BEFORE THE**

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

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Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, :

Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement :

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v. : Docket No. C-2020-3017229

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Verde Energy USA, Inc. :

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

The undersigned is a Reviewing Representative of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a party to this proceeding (“Party”), and is not or has no knowledge or basis for believing that he/she is a “Restricted Person,” as that term is defined in Paragraph 7. The undersigned has read and understands the Protective Order in the above-referenced proceeding, which Protective Order deals with the treatment of Proprietary Information. The undersigned agrees to be bound by, and comply with, the terms and conditions of said Protective Order.

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Name

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Signature

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Address

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Employer