

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Petition for increase in rates by Gulf
Power Company.

DOCKET NO. 110138-EI
ORDER NO. PSC-11-0394-PCO-EI
ISSUED: September 20, 2011

ORDER GRANTING INTERVENTION

Pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 366, Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Rules 25-6.0425 and 25-6.043, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Gulf Power Company (GPC or Company) commenced this proceeding on July 8, 2011, with the filing of a petition for a permanent rate increase. The Company is engaged in business as a public utility providing electric service as defined in Section 366.02, F.S., and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission. The Company based its request on a projected test year ending December 31, 2012.

Petition for Intervention

By petition, dated August 11, 2011, the Florida Retail Federation (FRF) requested permission to intervene in this proceeding. FRF states that it is an established association with more than 9,000 members in Florida, many of whom are retail customers of GPC. FRF further states that its members purchase electricity from GPC pursuant to different rate schedules. FRF asserts that its members require adequate, reasonably priced electricity in order to conduct their businesses consistent with the needs of their customers and ownership. As such, FRF contends that the substantial interests of its members will be directly affected by the Commission's decisions in this proceeding regarding GPC's retail electric rates. No party has filed an objection to FRF's petition and the time for doing so has expired.

Standards for Intervention

Pursuant to Rule 25-22.039, F.A.C., persons, other than the original parties to a pending proceeding, who have a substantial interest in the proceeding, and who desire to become parties may petition for leave to intervene. Petitions for leave to intervene must be filed at least five (5) days before the final hearing, must conform with Rule 28-106.201(2), F.A.C., and must include allegations sufficient to demonstrate that the intervenor is entitled to participate in the proceeding as a matter of constitutional or statutory right or pursuant to Commission rule, or that the substantial interests of the intervenor are subject to determination or will be affected through the proceeding. Intervenors take the case as they find it.

To have standing, the intervenor must meet the two-prong standing test set forth in Agrico Chemical Company v. Department of Environmental Regulation, 406 So. 2d 478, 482 (Fla. 2nd DCA 1981). The intervenor must show (1) that he will suffer injury in fact which is of sufficient immediacy to entitle him to a Section 120.57, F.S., hearing; and (2) that this substantial injury is of a type or nature which the proceeding is designed to protect. The first aspect of the test deals with the degree of injury. The second deals with the nature of the injury. The "injury in fact" must be both real and immediate and not speculative or conjectural. International Jai-

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Alai Players Assn. v. Florida Pari-Mutuel Commission, 561 So. 2d 1224, 1225-26 (Fla. 3rd DCA 1990); see also, Village Park Mobile Home Assn., Inc. v. State Dept. of Business Regulation, 506 So. 2d 426, 434 (Fla. 1st DCA 1987), rev. den., 513 So. 2d 1063 (Fla. 1987) (speculation on the possible occurrence of injurious events is too remote).

Further, the test for associational standing was established in Florida Home Builders v. Dept. of Labor and Employment Security, 412 So. 2d 351 (Fla. 1982), and Farmworker Rights Organization, Inc. v. Dept. of Health and Rehabilitative Services, 417 So. 2d 753 (Fla. 1st DCA 1982), which is also based on the basic standing principles established in Agrico, 406 So. 2d 478. Associational standing may be found where: (1) the association demonstrates that a substantial number of an association's members may be substantially affected by the Commission's decision in a docket; (2) the subject matter of the proceeding is within the association's general scope of interest and activity; and (3) the relief requested is of a type appropriate for the association to receive on behalf of its members.

Analysis & Ruling

It appears that FRF meets the two-prong standing test in Agrico, 406 So. 2d at 482 as well as the three-prong associational standing test established in Florida Home Builders, 412 So. 2d 351. FRF asserts that it is the representative of a large number of its more than 9,000 members who are retail electric customers of GPC. According to FRF, these members' substantial interests will be directly affected by the Commission's decisions regarding GPC's retail electric rates. FRF further states that this is the type of proceeding designed to protect its members' interests. Therefore, FRF's members meet the two-prong standing test of Agrico, 406 So. 2d at 482.

With respect to the first prong of the associational standing test, FRF asserts that many of its members are retail electric customers of GPC and that those members' substantial interests will be directly affected by the Commission's decision on whether to grant a rate increase. With respect to the second prong of the associational standing test, the subject matter of the proceeding appears to be within GPC's general scope of interest and activity. FRF is an established association whose members are retail consumers of GPC. FRF contends that its members will be directly affected by the proposed rates. As for the third prong of the associational standing test, FRF is seeking intervention in this docket in order to represent the interests of its members in this rate proceeding. Based on the foregoing analysis, FRF's standing in this docket has been established.

Because FRF meets the two-prong standing test established in Agrico, 406 So. 2d at 482, as well as the three-prong associational standing test established in Florida Home Builders, 412 So. 2d 351, FRF's petition for intervention shall be granted. Issue development is an ongoing process; while issues should be germane to this proceeding, disagreement as to the particular wording or inclusion of issues will ultimately be resolved at the Prehearing Conference. Pursuant to Rule 25-22.039, F.A.C., FRF takes the case as it finds it.

Based on the foregoing, it is

ORDERED by Commissioner Lisa Polak Edgar, as Prehearing Officer, that the Petition to Intervene filed by Florida Retail Federation is hereby granted as set forth in the body of this Order. It is further

ORDERED that all parties to this proceeding shall furnish copies of all testimony, exhibits, pleadings and other documents which may hereinafter be filed in this proceeding, to:

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By ORDER of Commissioner Lisa Polak Edgar, as Prehearing Officer, this 20th day of September, 2011.


LISA POLAK EDGAR
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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.