BEFORE THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE JOINT APPLICATION	
OF AVANGRID, INC., AVANGRID NETWORKS,)
INC., NM GREEN HOLDINGS, INC., PUBLIC)
SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW MEXICO AND PNM)
RESOURCES, INC., FOR APPROVAL OF THE)
MERGER OF NM GREEN HOLDINGS, INC. WITH	Case No. 20-00222-UT
PNM RESOURCES, INC.; APPROVAL OF A)
GENERAL DIVERSIFICATION PLAN; AND ALL)
OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS AND APPROVALS	
REQUIRED TO CONSUMMATE AND IMPLEMENT	
THIS TRANSACTION)
)
AVANGRID, INC., AVANGRID NETWORKS, INC.,	
NM GREEN HOLDINGS, INC., PUBLIC SERVICE	
COMPANY OF NEW MEXICO AND PNM)
RESOURCES, INC.,	
)
JOINT APPLICANTS.)
)

ORDER DENYING JOINT APPLICANTS' APRIL 22, 2021 REQUEST FOR CONFIDENTIALITY PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH K(2) OF THE PROTECTIVE ORDER

THIS MATTER comes before the Hearing Examiner upon the Joint Applicants' April 22, 2021 Request for Confidentiality Pursuant to Paragraph K(2) of the Protective Order ("Confidentiality Request"). Being fully informed, the Hearing Examiner FINDS and CONCLUDES as follows.

1. The Joint Applicants' Confidentiality Request

On April 15, 2021, the Hearing Examiner issued Bench Request No. 2 to the Joint Applicants. The Bench Request asked the Joint Applicants to provide (1) the most recent balance sheets for Public Service Company of New Mexico, PNM Resources, Inc., Avangrid, Inc. and Avangrid Networks, Inc. and (2) the estimated balance sheets for the same corporations

after the completion of the proposed transaction to illustrate the changes that will be effected with the transactions proposed in this case.

The Joint Applicants filed their response on April 22, 2021, including a redacted version of a portion of their response to the second item of the bench request. The Joint Applicants filed on the same date a request that the exhibit they labeled CONFIDENTIAL Bench Request No. 2 - Exhibit C (hereafter "Confidential Exhibit C") be treated as confidential ("Confidentiality Request") under the terms of the January 14, 2021 Protective Order. The Joint Applicants included with their Confidentiality Request the unredacted version of Confidential Exhibit C for the Hearing Examiner's *in camera* review.

The Joint Applicants state that Confidential Exhibit C includes forecasted financial information that is highly sensitive, not publicly available, and could be used by competitors or individuals trying to conduct trades of Avangrid, Inc.'s stock. They state that, under regulations issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC"), Avangrid and PNMR are required to publicly disclose (typically through a public filing on the SEC's website) any material non-public information it discloses outside of a confidentiality agreement or arrangement.

The Joint Applicants state that Avangrid has not finalized any post-closing balance sheet projections and has not publicly disclosed any draft or preliminary estimated balance sheet data as of any date after December 31, 2020 (including estimated balance sheet data of as March 31, 2021 or estimated "pro forma" balance sheets after giving effect to the PNMR acquisition).

They assert that Avangrid does not disclose draft and preliminary projections or forecasts, because such information is competitively sensitive, it does not want its shareholders

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¹ SEC Regulation FD (Fair Disclosure); 17 CFR Parts 240, 243, and 249.

to rely on such information (for example, Avangrid is still several months away from completing the accounting work required to finalize the purchase price allocations that will be applied to the balance sheet upon closing of the acquisition), and it believes the public disclosure of such information would expose it to undue risk and potential liability.

They also state that Avangrid takes significant measures to ensure confidentiality and that all financial disclosures need to be reviewed and approved/authorized by its senior management disclosure committee, its Audit and Compliance Committee, and its Board of Directors.

They state further that Avangrid believes that the public disclosure of such draft and preliminary information could inhibit its ability to make investments, manage its business and forthrightly communicate with regulatory and government bodies in the most desirable manner. However, if such information was publicly disclosed or provided outside of a confidential arrangement, Avangrid would be forced to disclose it publicly.

The Joint Applicants claim that the Balance Sheet in Confidential Exhibit C qualifies as a trade secret and should therefore be exempt from public disclosure under New Mexico law.

In support of its Confidentiality Request, Avangrid has attached the Affidavit of R. Scott Mahoney, who verifies the above facts and opinions.

2. Legal standards

a. The Public Utility Act

Section 62-10-5 of the Public Utility Act requires that all Commission hearings "shall be public." Section 62-6-17(C) authorizes the use of protective orders, but it also provides that the Commission may order the disclosure of information determined to be confidential or proprietary if the Commission determines that the information is material and relevant to a proceeding:

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² NMSA 1978, § 62-10-5.

The commission shall determine the materiality and relevancy of the books, records, accounts or documents to any matter before the commission and determine whether such books, records, accounts or documents contain confidential or proprietary information. If the commission determines such books, records, accounts or documents contain confidential or proprietary information that is material and relevant to the proceeding, it shall determine whether the public interest requires that such books, records, accounts or documents be produced in any hearing or investigation held under the Public Utility Act or that an abstract of or the extraction of specific information from such books, records, accounts or documents be produced for use in any such hearing or investigation.³

Section 1.2.2.8 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure establishes the Commission's policy "to allow full and complete access to public records in accordance with the Inspection of Public Records Act, Section 14-2-1 NMSA 1978 *et seq*,." and provides that, "[e]xcept when the commission or presiding officer directs otherwise, all pleadings, orders, communications, exhibits, or other documents shall become matters of public record as of the day and time of their filing." Subsection B of Section 1.2.2.8 also authorizes the Commission to issue protective orders upon a person's showing that "protection is consistent with the Inspection of Public Records Act, including protectable trade secrets." The party moving to protect documents from

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³ NMSA 1978, 62-6-17(C). *See e.g.*, Order Regarding Protective Order, Case No. 2353 (July 30, 1991). The Order, issued prior to the 1993 amendment to NMSA 1978, 62-6-17, adopted the following balancing test:

[[]T]he Commission should consider the extent to which the hearing must be closed, the amount of documents needing protection, and the relationship of these documents to the major issues in the proceeding. By considering these important elements, the Commission will satisfy the legislative policy of public hearings. The Commission should also balance the interests favoring disclosure against the interests favoring nondisclosure. Consideration should be given to potential harm done to the public or private interests if disclosure is made, or if it is not made. Substantial harm to a competitive position is certainly a relevant consideration.

Similar rulings have been issued after the 1993 amendment to NMSA 1978, 62-6-17: Order on Walmart's Request for Confidentiality Designation, Case No. 19-00158-UT, March 5, 2020, at 13; Order Granting NEE Request to Remove Confidentiality Designation from NEE Interrogatory 1-7 and 7-1 Documents, Case No. 16-00276-UT, July 5, 2017, at 10; Order Denying Request for Confidential Treatment of Legal Services Contracts, Case No. 16-00276-UT, May 3, 2017, at 9-10; Order Addressing Motions to Protect Contracts and Billing Information, Case No. 11-00123-UT, July 14, 2011, at 14-16.

⁴ 1.2.2.8(A) NMAC.

⁵ 1.2.2.8(B) NMAC.

public disclosure bears the burden of establishing its right, if any, to such protection.⁶

b. Inspection of Public Records Act

The New Mexico Inspection of Public Records Act ("IPRA") states that "[e]very person has a right to inspect public records of this state, except" for records that fall within eight defined exceptions. The stated purpose of the IPRA is that all persons are entitled to the "greatest possible information" regarding the affairs of government:

Recognizing that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate, the intent of the legislature in enacting the Inspection of Public Records Act is to ensure, and it is declared to be the public policy of this state, that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of public officers and employees. It is the further intent of the legislature, and it is declared to be the public policy of this state, that to provide persons with such information is an essential function of a representative government and an integral part of the routine duties of public officers and employees.⁷

The New Mexico Supreme Court, in interpreting the IPRA, has held that "there is strong public policy favoring access to public records."

c. Trade Secrets Act

"Trade secrets" are exempt from disclosure under the IPRA pursuant to the "as otherwise provided by law" exception. The Trade Secrets Act, as adopted in New Mexico, establishes a two-prong test for information to qualify as a "trade secret:"

⁶ *Id*.

⁷ NMSA 1978, § 14-2-5.

⁸ City of Las Cruces v. Public Employee Labor Relations Board, 121 N.M. 688, 691, 917 P.2d 451, 454 (1996); see also State ex rel. Newsome v. Alarid, 90 N.M. 790, 797, 568 P.2d 1236, 1243 (1977) (citizen's right to know is the rule and secrecy is the exception); Republican Party v. New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Dep't, Docket No. 32,524 (6-28-12) (overruling cases applying "the rule of reason" to the extent that they conflict with Republican Party and directing that "courts now should restrict their analysis to whether disclosure under IPRA may be withheld because of a specific exception contained in the IPRA, or statutory or regulatory exceptions, or privileges adopted by this Court or grounded in the constitution.").

⁹ NMSA 1978, §14-2-1(H).

- D. "trade secret" means information, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process, that:
- (1) derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use; and
- (2) is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.¹⁰

d. Open Meetings Act

The Commission must consider the ramifications of the Open Meetings Act, ¹¹ if it decides to permit the sealing of material and relevant evidence. Deliberations by the Commission are governed by the Open Meetings Act, and those deliberations are generally conducted in open session. The Commission's final decision must be in writing and, at a minimum, contain findings of ultimate fact. Additionally, the Open Meetings Act states, "Except as otherwise provided in this section [§ 10-15-1(H)], the actual administrative adjudicatory proceeding at which evidence is offered or rebutted and any final action taken as a result of the proceeding shall occur in an open meeting[.]"¹²

Any decision to treat information as confidential may limit the Commission's ability to discuss the information in public session and to include the information in its decisions. If the information is considered confidential, the discussion of the information will have to be conducted in closed session at the hearing and in the Commission's deliberations, and the Recommended Decision and Final Order will have to avoid or redact all references to the information.

¹⁰ NMSA 1978, § 57-3A-2(D).

¹¹ NMSA 1978, §§ 10-15-1, et seq.

¹² NMSA 1978, § 10-15-1(H)(3).

3. Findings

The Hearing Examiner finds that the Confidentiality Request should be denied.

Public disclosure of the estimated financial impact of the merger on the Avangrid/PNMR affiliates is in the public interest even if the disclosure relates to confidential material.¹³ It is in the public interest for the public to understand and for the Commissioners to be able to publicly discuss how the financial transactions associated with the merger will affect the financial condition of PNM and the Avangrid/PNMR affiliates.

As discussed in Section 2.a above, the Commission has the authority under NMSA 1978, \$62-6-17(C) to order the disclosure of information relevant to central issues in a proceeding even if the information might be considered confidential or proprietary. In this case, Avangrid has put forward the strength of its financial condition as a central reason that the proposed merger and acquisition is in the public interest. As examples, Mr. Azagra Blazquez testifies that Iberdrola's financial profile and strong credit can help PNM access the capital it requires in the future at more favorable rates. If Mr. Tarry states Avangrid can bring its financial resources to PNM's efforts to modernize its grid. The Joint Applicants also offer the testimony of a financial expert, Ellen Lapson, who testifies that, if PNM needs equity for any reason, Avangrid (and its 81.5% parent, Iberdrola) will have broader resources and greater ability to supply capital to PNM. The Joint Applicants have also included as important provisions in the Stipulation

¹³ See discussion of NMSA 1978, §62-6-17(C) in section 2.a, supra.

¹⁴ *Id*.

¹⁵ Azagra Blazquez Dir., at 15.

¹⁶ Tarry Dir., at 10.

¹⁷ Lapson Dir., at 10.

the extinguishment of PNMR's debt and the assurance that ratepayers will not be encumbered with the acquisition premium and goodwill associated with the merger.

The economic value that the Joint Applicants ascribe to the information for their trade secret claim relates primarily to the potential effect of the public disclosure on trading in Avangrid's stock and in Avangrid's stock price. That value, in turn, appears to be based on investors' perceptions of whether the transaction will increase or decrease the value of the company and the stockholders' interests in the company. The Joint Applicants do not claim the public disclosure will affect in any other way PNM's ability to provide reliable electric utility service, which the Stipulation's signatories state will be the sole authorized purpose of PNM. 19

The extent to which the information affects the value of the company appears to be based in part on the extent to which the information reveals whether the transaction will have economic merit. The economic merit of the transaction is a central concern for the Commission and the public. Further, in regard to the Joint Applicants' argument that Avangrid has still not finalized its accounting for the financial impact of the transaction, the extent to which Avangrid has, or has not, done so at this stage of the transaction and at this stage of the regulatory review is also relevant, both to the Commission and the public. Avangrid's uncertainty about the financial impact of the transaction should be a concern for the Commission and the public.

¹⁸ When considering the Joint Applicants' concern about transparency for investors, it should be noted that, although Avangrid has more than 3,000 stockholders, 90% of the stock is owned by two investors -- Iberdrola (81.5%) and the Qatar Investment Authority (8.69%). See, Azagra Blazquez Dir., at 7, Azagra Blazquez Reb., at 8, Crane Dir., at 33. And, as noted below, Iberdrola and the Qatar Investment Authority purchased 100% of Avangrid's recent \$4 billion private placement of common stock.

Iberdrola and the Qatar Investment Authority likely have access to more detailed and revealing information about Avangrid's financial condition and the impact of the merger on that condition than is contained in Confidential Exhibit C. The public disclosure of Confidential Exhibit C will therefore not likely affect the buying and selling of Avangrid stock in any meaningful way.

¹⁹ See Stipulation, ¶18.

Moreover, trade secret protection does not extend to information that has already been publicly disclosed.²⁰ It appears that much of the information contained in Confidential Exhibit C is already in the public domain. Mr. Azagra Blazquez states in his April 21 and June 18 testimonies that Avangrid will finance the purchase of PNMR's stock with a \$700 million public bond offering prior to the closing of the proposed transaction and through the issuance and sale of shares of Avangrid common stock.²¹ His June 18 testimony states that Avangrid conducted a private placement on May 12, 2021 in which 81.5% of the Avangrid, Inc. common stock was purchased by Iberdrola for \$3.26 billion and the remaining 18.5% was purchased by a wholly owned subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority for \$740 million.²²

Mr. Azagra Blazquez also testifies in his April 21 rebuttal testimony that Avangrid will create new special purpose entities, called separate purchase price allocation entities, at Avangrid Networks, Inc. The purchase price allocation entities' sole purpose will be to hold the goodwill arising out of the proposed transaction. He said the separate purchase price allocation entities guarantee that the goodwill from the proposed transaction stays off PNM's books and will not be recovered from PNM's customers.²³ In his June 18 testimony in support of the Stipulation, he also describes a process through which the goodwill might be written off -- without discussing the impact of the write-off.²⁴

Mr. Kump's June 18 testimony further discusses a \$1.0 billion delayed-draw term loan agreement entered into by PNMR with an initial draw of \$850 million, leaving \$150 million

²⁰ See, e.g., Pincheira v. Allstate Ins. Co., 2008-NMSC-049, ¶60, 144 N.M. 601, 614.

²¹ Azagra Blazquez Reb., at 5; Azagra Blazquez Stip., at 32.

²² Azagra Blazquez Stip., at 33; JA Exhibit PAB-5 (Stipulation).

²³ Azagra Blazquez Reb., at 3-4.

²⁴ Azagra Blazquez Stip., at 34.

undrawn to fund PNMR's financing requirements into January 2022. He testifies that Avangrid will assume the obligations under the term loan at closing.²⁵

Finally, the Joint Applicants and Mr. Mahoney acknowledge that the SEC restrictions they cite on the disclosure of the information can be resolved by filing a disclosure with the SEC. The disclosure ordered here can be accommodated with such a filing without violating SEC requirements.²⁶

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

- 1. The Joint Applicants' Confidentiality Request is **DENIED**.
- 2. The Joint Applicants shall file a public, unredacted version of what is currently labeled Confidential Exhibit C by July 9, 2021.

ISSUED at Santa Fe, New Mexico, this July 6, 2021.

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

/s/ Ashley C. Schannauer	

Ashley C. Schannauer Hearing Examiner

²⁵ Kump Stip., at 21.

²⁶ In response to the Hearing Examiner's request in the May 28, 2021 Procedural Order For Proceedings Addressing Contested Stipulation why Confidential Exhibit C deserves confidential treatment in light of the public disclosure on May 12, 2021 to the SEC regarding Avangrid's stock issuance and sale, Mr. Kump stated that the information in Avangrid's May 2021 SEC filings included only information as of March 31, 2021 and did not include the projected impact of the merger with PNMR. He said Exhibit C includes the projected financial impact of the merger which should not be publicly disclosed at this time. Kump Stip., at 20.

BEFORE THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE JOINT APPLICATION OF)	
AVANGRID, INC., AVANGRID NETWORKS, INC., NM)	
GREEN HOLDINGS, INC., PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY)	
OF NEW MEXICO AND PNM RESOURCES, INC. FOR)	
APPROVAL OF THE MERGER OF NM GREEN)	Case No. 20-00222-UT
HOLDINGS, INC. WITH PNM RESOURCES, INC.;)	
APPROVAL OF A GENERAL DIVERSIFICATION PLAN;)	
AND ALL OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS AND APPROVALS)	
REQUIRED TO CONSUMMATE AND IMPLEMENT THIS)	
TRANSACTION)	

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I CERTIFY that on this date I sent via email to the parties listed below a true and correct copy of the Order Denying Joint Applicants' April 22, 2021 Request for Confidentiality Pursuant to Paragraph K(2) of the Protective Order.

Ryan Jerman Ryan Jerman@pmresources.com; Richard Alvidrez Ralvidrez@mstlaw.com; Altza Dawn Chavez Steven Schwebke Carey.salaz@pmn.com; Joseph Hernandez Joseph Hernandes Joseph Hernandez Joseph Hernandez Joseph Hernandez	Stacey Goodwin	Stacey.Goodwin@pnmresources.com;	Kyle J. Tisdel	tisdel@westernlaw.org;
Mark Fenton Mark_Fenton@pnm.com; Joseph Hernandez joseph@navaeducationproject.org; Carey Salaz Carey.salaz@pnm.com; Nicole Horseherder nhorseherder@gmail.com; Steven Schwebke Steven.Schwebke@pnm.com; Jessica Keetso ikcetso@yahoo.com; Mariel Nanasi Mariel@seedsbeneaththesnow.com; Mike Eisenfeld mike@sanjuancitizens.org; Christopher Sandberg cksandberg@me.com; Robyn Jackson Robyn Jackson Glore-care.org; Joan Drake Jane L. Yee jyee@cabq.gov; Haley B. Adams hadams@modrall.com; Lary Blank, Ph.D. lb@taboeconomics.com; Lisa Tormoen Hickey nwinter@stelznerlaw.com; Kelly Gould kelly@cabq.gov; Nann M. Winter kein Herrmann@stelznerlaw.com; Kelly Gould kelly@thegouldlawfirm.com; Keith Herrmann kherrmann@stelznerlaw.com; Michael Gorman mgorman@consultbai.com; Peter Auh pauh@abcwua.org; Michael Gorman mgorman@consultbai.com; Jody Garcia JGarcia@stelznerlaw.com; Stephanie Dzur Stephanie Dzur Steven S. Michel April Elliott April Elliott April Elli	Ryan Jerman	Ryan.Jerman@pnmresources.com;	Ally Beasley	beasley@westernlaw.org;
Carey_Salaz Carey_salaz@pmm.com; Steven.Schwebke Steven.Schwebke Patrick V. Apodaca	Richard Alvidrez	Ralvidrez@mstlaw.com;	Ahtza Dawn Chavez	ahtza@navaeducationproject.org;
Steven Schwebke Steven.Schwebke@pnm.com; Jessica Keetso jkeetso@yahoo.com; Steven Schwebke@pnm.com; Jessica Keetso jkeetso@yahoo.com; Singer@westernlaw.org; Mariel@seedsbeneaththesnow.com; Mike Eisenfeld mike@sanjuancitizens.org; Christopher Sandberg cksandberg@me.com; Mike Eisenfeld mike@sanjuancitizens.org; Robyn Jackson Robyn, jackson@dine-care.org; Joan Drake jdrake@modrall.com; Jane L. Yee jvee@cabq.gov; Haley B. Adams hadams@modrall.com; Larry Blank, Ph.D. b@tahoeconomics.com; Stif Ismail sismail@cabq.gov; Nann M. Winter nwinter@stelznerlaw.com; Peter J. Gould Kelly@cubawfirm.com; Kelty Gould Kelly@cubawfirm.com; Jim Dauphinais jdauphinais@consultbai.com; Jim Dauphinais jdauphinais@consultbai.com; Joarcia@stelznerlaw.com; Stephanie Dzur Stepha	Mark Fenton	Mark.Fenton@pnm.com;	Joseph Hernandez	joseph@navaeducationproject.org;
Patrick V. Apodaca Patrick Apodaca@pnmresources.com; Mariel Nanasi Mariel@seedsbeneaththesnow.com; Mike Eisenfeld mike@sanjuancitizens.org; jane L. Yee jyee@cabq.gov; jee@cabq.gov; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; lb@atahoeconomics.com; log.atif.com, peter@atahoeconomics.com; log.atif.com, peter@atahoeconomics.com; log.atif.com, peter@atahoeconomics.com; log.atif.com, peter@atahoeconomics.com; log.atif.com, peter@atahoeconomics.com; log.atif.com, log.atif	Carey Salaz	Carey.salaz@pnm.com;	Nicole Horseherder	nhorseherder@gmail.com;
Mariel Nanasi Mariel@seedsbeneaththesnow.com; cksandberg (cksandberg@mc.com; cksandberg@mc.com; cksandberg@mc.com; cksandberg@mc.com; cksandberg@mc.com; dksandberg@mc.com; lane L. Yee mike@sanjuancitizens.org; nobyn.jackson@dine-care.org; pree@cabg.gov; Joan Drake Jane L. Yee jyee@cabg.gov; Haley B. Adams hadams@modrall.com; lisahickey@newlawgroup.com; lisahickey@newlawgroup.com; nowinter@stelznerlaw.com; Larry Blank, Ph.D. lb@tahoeconomics.com; sismail@cabd.gov; nowinter@stelznerlaw.com; lb@tahoeconomics.com; lb@tahoeconomics.com; sismail@cabd.gov; nowinter@stelznerlaw.com; nowinter@stelznerlaw.com; lb@tahoeconomics.com; lb@tahoeconomi	Steven Schwebke	Steven.Schwebke@pnm.com;	Jessica Keetso	jkeetso@yahoo.com;
Christopher Sandberg	Patrick V. Apodaca	Patrick.Apodaca@pnmresources.com;	Thomas Singer	Singer@westernlaw.org;
Joan Drake Haley B. Adams Haley B. Adams Lisa Tormoen Hickey Nann M. Winter Nann	Mariel Nanasi		Mike Eisenfeld	mike@sanjuancitizens.org;
Haley B. Adams hadams@modrall.com; Larry Blank, Ph.D. Sair Ismail sismail@cabq.gov; Nann M. Winter Ninter@stelznerlaw.com; Peter J. Gould Peter@thegouldlawfirm.com; Kelth Herrmann Kherrmann@stelznerlaw.com; Harris Sair Ismail Sismail@cabq.gov; Nann M. Winter Ninter@stelznerlaw.com; Peter J. Gould Peter@thegouldlawfirm.com; Kelth Herrmann Kherrmann@stelznerlaw.com; Jim Dauphinais jdauphinais@consultbai.com; pauh@abewua.org; Michael Gorman mgorman@consultbai.com; mgorman@consultbai.com; mgorman@consultbai.com; jdauphinais@consultbai.com; mgorman@consultbai.com; jesky@leskylawoffice.com; Stephanie Dzur Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; April Elliott Smichel@westernresources.org; Don Hancock Sricdon@earthlink.net; Cydney.Beadles@westernresources.org; Don Hancock Sricdon@earthlink.net; Codewey.Beadles@westernresources.org; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; April Elliott Cae@elliottanalytics.com; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; April Elliott Cae@elliottanalytics.com; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; April Elliott Cae@elliottanalytics.com; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Don Hancock Scott.Mahoney@avangrid.com; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Don Hancock Scott.Mahoney@avangrid.com; Dipat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Don Hancock Scott.Mahoney@avangrid.com; David L. Schwartz David L. S	Christopher Sandberg	cksandberg@me.com;	Robyn Jackson	Robyn.jackson@dine-care.org;
Lisa Tormoen Hickey Nann M. Winter Neith Herrmann N. Winter N. Kelly Gould Nelly Gould N. Kelly Gould N. Kelly Gould Nelly Gould Nelly Gould Nelly N. Kelly Gould Nelly Gould Nelly M. Kelly Gould Nelly Gould Nelly M. Kelly G	Joan Drake		Jane L. Yee	jyee@cabq.gov;
Nann M. Winternwinter@stelznerlaw.com; kherrmannPeter J. Gould kherrmann@stelznerlaw.com; dahlharrisPeter J. Gould kelly Gould Jim Dauphinais Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Mathew Gerhart Mathew Gerhar	Haley B. Adams	hadams@modrall.com;	Larry Blank, Ph.D.	<u>lb@tahoeconomics.com;</u>
Keith Herrmannkherrmann@stelznerlaw.com; dahlharris@hotmail.com; pauh@abcwua.org; Andrew HarrigerKelly Gould Jim Dauphinais Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Justin Lesky Justin Lesky Justin Lesky Justin Lesky Jilesky@leskylawoffice.com; Stephanie@Dzur-law.com; Steven S. Michel April Elliott Cydney Beadles Cydney.Beadles@westernresources.org; Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Doug Gegax April elliot@mag.gov; Ctolumbia@aol.com; Joseph Yar Jesph Yar Jesph Yar Jeffrey AlbrightKelly Gould Mahlarris@hotmail.com; Jim Dauphinais Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Manchael Daur Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Jim Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Manchael Dauphinais Michael Gorman Manchael Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Michael Gorman Manchael Dauphinais Michael Gorman Michael Gorma	Lisa Tormoen Hickey	lisahickey@newlawgroup.com;	Saif Ismail	
Dahl Harris Peter Auh Peter Auh Peter Auh Pauh@abcwua.org; Andrew Harriger Jody García JGarcia@stelznerlaw.com; Jody García April Elliott April Elliott Cydney Beadles Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Cholla Khoury Ciden Elliot Sending.gov; Ciden Elliot Sending.gov; Andrea Crane Crane Doug Gegax Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Joseph April Elliot April Elliott Sending.gov; April Elliott Sending	Nann M. Winter	nwinter@stelznerlaw.com;	Peter J. Gould	peter@thegouldlawfirm.com;
Peter Auh Andrew Harriger Jody García JGarcia@stelznerlaw.com; Steven S. Michel April Elliott April elliott@westernresources.org; Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Andrew Wiel Andrew Gegax Doug Gegax	Keith Herrmann	kherrmann@stelznerlaw.com;	Kelly Gould	Kelly@thegouldlawfirm.com;
Andrew Harriger Jody García JGarcia@stelznerlaw.com; Steven S. Michel April.elliott@westernresources.org; Cydney Beadles Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Josephanie Dzur Ramona Blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; April Elliott Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; April Elliott Ccae@elliottanalytics.com; Noah Long Rian J. Haverly Dih@keleher-law.com; Brian J. Haverly Dih@keleher-law.com; Iawoffice@jasonmarks.com; Matthew Gerhart Matthew Gerhart Matthew Gerhart Matthew Gerhart Matthew Gerhart David L. Schwartz Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Doug	Dahl Harris	dahlharris@hotmail.com;	Jim Dauphinais	
Jody García JGarcia@stelznerlaw.com; Steven S. Michel April Elliott April Elliott Cydney Beadles Cydney Beadles Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Joseph Warlawoffice.com; Bruce C. Throne Ramona Blaber Ramona blaber (Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona Blaber Ramona blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona.blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Scidon@earthlink.net; ccae@elliottanalytics.com; Nlong@nrdc.org; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; bjh@keleher-law.com; Jason Marks lawoffice@jasonmarks.com; matt.gerhart@sierraclub.org; matt.gerhart@sierraclub.org; Ramona.blaber Sricdon@earthlink.net; ccae@elliottanalytics.com; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Noah Long Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; Noah Long Noa	Peter Auh	pauh@abcwua.org;	Michael Gorman	mgorman@consultbai.com;
Steven S. Michel April Elliott April.elliott(@westernresources.org; Cydney Beadles Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Aprileliot@uesternresources.org; Douglas J. Howe Gerhart Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Bruce C. Throne Ramona.blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Ramona Blaber Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org; Sricdon@earthlink.net; Ccae@elliottlanalytics.com; Noah Long Nlong@nrdc.org; bjh@keleher-law.com; bjh@keleher-law.com; lawoffice@jasonmarks.com; matt.gerhart@sierraclub.org; Brian J. Haverly bjh@keleher-law.com; lawoffice@jasonmarks.com; matt.gerhart@sierraclub.org; Scott.Mahoney Scott.Mahoney Scott.Mahoney@avangrid.com; david.schwartz@lw.com; Katherine Coleman Katie.coleman@tklaw.com; Thompson & Knight Tk.eservice@tklaw.com; Tk.eservice@tklaw.com; Sharon T. Shaheen Bruce C. Throne Bruce C. Throne Rob Witwer witwerr@southwestgen.com; Jeffrey Albright JA@Jalblaw.com; Ja@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair hadair@fmtn.org;	Andrew Harriger		Justin Lesky	
April Elliott April.elliott@westernresources.org; Cydney Beadles Cydney.Beadles@westernresources.org; Pat O'Connell Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Joseph Witwer Rob Ware Sernersources.org; Rob Hank Adair Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Rob Hank Adair Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Rob Long Rob Nichaell Long Rob Nichaell Long Rob Nichaelle Spinlence Rob Witwer Rob Naric Haverly Rob Nichael Long Rob Nichael Long Rob Nichael Rob Nichael Rob Nichael Rob Nicha	Jody García	JGarcia@stelznerlaw.com;		
Cydney BeadlesCydney.Beadles@westernresources.org; pat.oconnellApril Elliottccae@elliottanalytics.com;Pat O'Connellpat.oconnell@westernresources.org; Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Cholla Khourydhowe@highrocknm.com; ckhoury@nmag.gov; ckhoury@nmag.gov;Brian J. Haverly Jason Marksbjh@keleher-law.com; lawoffice@jasonmarks.com;Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Cranegelliot@nmag.gov; ivanwiel@nmag.gov; Andrea CraneR. Scott Mahoney David L. Schwartz Katherine Coleman Joseph YarScott.Mahoney@avangrid.com; david.schwartz@lw.com;Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Jeffrey Spurgeondgegax@nmsu.edu; joseph@yarlawoffice.com; spurgeonJ@southwestgen.com; Bruce C. ThroneKatherine Coleman Katie.coleman@tklaw.com; Thompson & Knight Sharon T. Shaheen Sharon T. ShaheenTk.eservice@tklaw.com; rbartell@montand.com; shaheen@montand.com;Rob Witwerwitwerr@southwestgen.com; witwerr@southwestgen.com;Jennifer Breakell JA@Jalblaw.com;jbreakell@fmtn.org;Jeffrey AlbrightJA@Jalblaw.com;Hank Adairhadair@fmtn.org;	Steven S. Michel	smichel@westernresources.org;	Ramona Blaber	Ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org;
Pat O'Connellpat.oconnell@westernresources.org;Noah LongNlong@nrdc.org;Douglas J. Howedhowe@highrocknm.com;Brian J. Haverlybjh@keleher-law.com;Cholla Khouryckhoury@nmag.gov;Jason Markslawoffice@jasonmarks.com;Gideon Elliotgelliot@nmag.gov;Matthew Gerhartmatt.gerhart@sierraclub.org;Jennifer Van Wieljvanwiel@nmag.gov;R. Scott MahoneyScott.Mahoney@avangrid.com;Andrea Cranectcolumbia@aol.com;David L. Schwartzdavid.schwartz@lw.com;Doug Gegaxdgegax@nmsu.edu;Katherine ColemanKatie.coleman@tklaw.com;Joseph Yarjoseph@yarlawoffice.com;Thompson & KnightTk.eservice@tklaw.com;Jeffrey SpurgeonspurgeonJ@southwestgen.com;Randy S. Bartellrbartell@montand.com;Bruce C. Thronebthroneatty@newmexico.com;Sharon T. Shaheensshaheen@montand.com;Rob Witwerwitwerr@southwestgen.com;Jennifer Breakelljbreakell@fmtn.org;Jeffrey AlbrightJA@Jalblaw.com;Hank Adairhadair@fmtn.org;	April Elliott	April.elliott@westernresources.org;	Don Hancock	
Douglas J. Howe Cholla Khoury Cholla Khoury Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot Jennifer Van Wiel Jennifer Van Wiel Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Jeffrey Spurgeon Bruce C. Throne Rob Witwer Rob Warthew Gerhart Rob Watthew Gerhart Ratthew Gerhart Ratthew Gerhart Ratthew Gerhart Ratthew Gerhart Ratthew Gerhart Ratthew Gerhar	Cydney Beadles	Cydney.Beadles@westernresources.org;	April Elliott	ccae@elliottanalytics.com;
Cholla Khoury Gideon Elliot gelliot@nmag.gov; Jennifer Van Wiel Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Jeffrey Spurgeon Bruce C. Throne Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Joseph (April 1964) Ekhoury@nmag.gov; gelliot@nmag.gov; Andrea Grane ctcolumbia@aol.com; David L. Schwartz Matthew Gerhart Mattleerhart@sierraclub.org; Advid.schwartz@lw.com; Katie.coleman@tklaw.com; Tk.eservice@tklaw.com; Tk.eservice@tklaw.com; rbartell@montand.com; sshaheen@montand.com; sshaheen@montand.com; jbreakell@fmtn.org; Ja@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair hadair@fmtn.org;	Pat O'Connell	pat.oconnell@westernresources.org;		Nlong@nrdc.org;
Gideon Elliot gelliot@nmag.gov; Jennifer Van Wiel jvanwiel@nmag.gov; Andrea Crane ctcolumbia@aol.com; Doug Gegax dgegax@nmsu.edu; Joseph Yar joseph@yarlawoffice.com; Jeffrey Spurgeon spurgeonJ@southwestgen.com; Bruce C. Throne bthroneatty@newmexico.com; Rob Witwer witwerr@southwestgen.com; Jeffrey Albright JA@Jalblaw.com; Matthew Gerhart R. Scott Mahoney Scott.Mahoney@avangrid.com; Katherine Coleman Katie.coleman@tklaw.com; Thompson & Knight Tk.eservice@tklaw.com; rbartell@montand.com; sharon T. Shaheen shaheen@montand.com; jbreakell@fmtn.org; Jennifer Breakell jbreakell@fmtn.org; hadair@fmtn.org;	Douglas J. Howe		Brian J. Haverly	
Jennifer Van Wiel Andrea Crane Crane Doug Gegax Joseph Yar Joseph Yar Jeffrey Spurgeon Bruce C. Throne Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Rob Witwer Jeffrey Albright Ja@Jalblaw.com; Jennifer Van Wiel jvanwiel@nmag.gov; R. Scott Mahoney Rob Katherine Coleman Katherine Coleman Katherine Coleman Katherine Coleman Katherine Coleman Katherine Coleman Randy S. Bartell Randy S. Bartell Sharon T. Shaheen Sharon T. Shaheen Jennifer Breakell Ja@Jalblaw.com; Jennifer Breakell Ja@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair Rob Witwer Jamier Breakell Ja@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair Rob Witwer Jamier Breakell Ja@Jalblaw.com;	Cholla Khoury		Jason Marks	
Andrea Crane		gelliot@nmag.gov;	Matthew Gerhart	
Doug Gegaxdgegax@nmsu.edu; joseph YarKatherine Coleman joseph@yarlawoffice.com;Katherine Coleman Thompson & KnightKatie.coleman@tklaw.com;Jeffrey SpurgeonspurgeonJ@southwestgen.com; Bruce C. ThroneRandy S. Bartell bthroneatty@newmexico.com; Witwerr@southwestgen.com; Witwerr@southwestgen.com;Sharon T. Shaheen Jennifer Breakell Hank Adairsshaheen@montand.com; jbreakell@fmtn.org; hadair@fmtn.org;	Jennifer Van Wiel		R. Scott Mahoney	Scott.Mahoney@avangrid.com;
Joseph Yarjoseph@yarlawoffice.com; spurgeonJ@southwestgen.com;Thompson & Knight Randy S. BartellTk.eservice@tklaw.com; rbartell@montand.com;Bruce C. Thronebthroneatty@newmexico.com; Rob WitwerSharon T. Shaheensshaheen@montand.com; sshaheen@montand.com;Jeffrey AlbrightJA@Jalblaw.com;Hank Adairhadair@fmtn.org;	Andrea Crane	ctcolumbia@aol.com;	David L. Schwartz	david.schwartz@lw.com;
Jeffrey Spurgeon spurgeonJ@southwestgen.com; Randy S. Bartell rbartell@montand.com; Bruce C. Throne bthroneatty@newmexico.com; Sharon T. Shaheen sshaheen@montand.com; Rob Witwer witwerr@southwestgen.com; Jennifer Breakell jbreakell@fmtn.org; Jeffrey Albright JA@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair hadair@fmtn.org;	Doug Gegax		Katherine Coleman	
Bruce C. Throne Bruce C. Throne Rob Witwer Bruce C. Throne Witwerr@southwestgen.com; Jeffrey Albright Bruce C. Throne Witwerr@southwestgen.com; Jennifer Breakell Hank Adair Hank Adair Madair@fmtn.org;	Joseph Yar			
Rob Witwer witwerr@southwestgen.com; Jennifer Breakell jbreakell@fmtn.org; Jeffrey Albright JA@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair hadair@fmtn.org;				<u>rbartell@montand.com;</u>
Jeffrey Albright JA@Jalblaw.com; Hank Adair hadair@fmtn.org;	Bruce C. Throne		Sharon T. Shaheen	sshaheen@montand.com;
	Rob Witwer	witwerr@southwestgen.com;		
Michael I. Garcia <u>mikgarcia@bernco.gov;</u> Cindy A. Crane <u>ccrane@enchantenergy.com;</u>	Jeffrey Albright	JA@Jalblaw.com;	Hank Adair	
	Michael I. Garcia	mikgarcia@bernco.gov;	Cindy A. Crane	ccrane@enchantenergy.com;

Amanda Edwards	AE@Jalblaw.com;	Peter Mandelstam	peterm@enchantenergy.com;
Matt Dunne	dunneconsultingllc@gmail.com;	Steve W. Chriss	Stephen.chriss@wal-mart.com;
Maureen Reno	mreno@reno-energy.com;	Katherine Lagen	Katherine.lagen@sierraclub.org;
Richard L. C. Virtue	rvirtue@virtuelaw.com;	Camilla Feibelman	Camilla.Feibelman@sierraclub.org;
Daniel A. Najjar	dnajjar@virtuelaw.com;	Michael C. Smith	Michaelc.smith@state.nm.us;
Philo Shelton	Philo.Shelton@lacnm.us;	Bradford Borman	Bradford.Borman@state.nm.us;
Kevin Powers	Kevin.Powers@lacnm.us;	Peggy Martinez-Rael	Peggy.Martinez-Rael@state.nm.us;
Robert Cummins	Robert.Cummins@lacnm.us;	Elizabeth Ramirez	Elizabeth.Ramirez@state.nm.us;
Steven Gross	gross@portersimon.com;	Gilbert Fuentes	GilbertT.Fuentes@state.nm.us;
Martin R. Hopper	mhopper@msrpower.org;	Jack Sidler	Jack.sidler@state.nm.us;
Kurt J. Boehm	kboehm@bkllawfirm.com;	John Bogatko	John.Bogatko@state.nm.us;
Bill Templeman	WTempleman@cmtisantafe.com;	Milo Chavez	Milo.Chavez@state.nm.us;
Justin Bieber	jbieber@energystrat.com;	Marc Tupler	Marc.Tupler@state.nm.us;
Julie A. Wolfe	julie@dietzedavis.com;	Elisha Leyba-Tercero	Elisha.Leyba-Tercero@state.nm.us;
Andrew Wernsdorfer	andy@berrendoenergy.com;	Gabriella Dasheno	Gabriella.Dasheno@state.nm.us;
Joel Johnson	<u>Joel@berrendoenergy.com;</u>	Dhiraj Solomon	Dhiraj.Solomon@state.nm.us;
		John Reynolds	John.Reynolds@state.nm.us;
		Ana Kippenbrock	Ana.Kippenbrock@state.nm.us;

DATED July 6, 2021

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

Ana C. Kippenbrock

Ana C. Kippenbrock, Law Clerk