

OPEN MEETING ITEM

COMMISSIONERS
BOB STUMP – Chairman
GARY PIERCE
BRENDA BURNS
BOB BURNS
SUSAN BITTER SMITH



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ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

2014 APR -3 P 2:26

Arizona Corporation Commission
DOCKETED

DATE: APRIL 3, 2014

DOCKET NO.: E-01773A-14-0019

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION
DOCKET CONTROL

APR 03 2014

TO ALL PARTIES:

DOCKETED BY

Enclosed please find the recommendation of Administrative Law Judge Jane L. Rodda. The recommendation has been filed in the form of an Order on:

ARIZONA ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE, INC.
(FINANCE)

Pursuant to A.A.C. R14-3-110(B), you may file exceptions to the recommendation of the Administrative Law Judge by filing an original and thirteen (13) copies of the exceptions with the Commission's Docket Control at the address listed below by **4:00** p.m. on or before:

APRIL 4, 2014

Company has waived the 10 days for filing of exceptions

The enclosed is NOT an order of the Commission, but a recommendation of the Administrative Law Judge to the Commissioners. Consideration of this matter has tentatively been scheduled for the Commission's Open Meeting to be held on:

APRIL 8, 2014 and APRIL 9, 2014

For more information, you may contact Docket Control at (602) 542-3477 or the Hearing Division at (602) 542-4250. For information about the Open Meeting, contact the Executive Director's Office at (602) 542-3931.

ORIGINAL

JODI JERICH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1200 WEST WASHINGTON STREET; PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2927 / 400 WEST CONGRESS STREET; TUCSON, ARIZONA 85701-1347

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This document is available in alternative formats by contacting Shaylin Bernal, ADA Coordinator, voice phone number 602-542-3931, E-mail SABernal@azcc.gov.

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BEFORE THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS

BOB STUMP - Chairman
GARY PIERCE
BRENDA BURNS
BOB BURNS
SUSAN BITTER SMITH

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF
ARIZONA ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE,
INC. FOR AUTHORIZATION TO OBTAIN TWO
COMMITTED REVOLVING LINES OF CREDIT.

DOCKET NO. E-01773A-14-0019

DECISION NO. _____

ORDER

Open Meeting
April 8 and 9, 2014
Phoenix, Arizona

BY THE COMMISSION:

* * * * *

Having considered the entire record herein and being fully advised in the premises, the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") finds, concludes, and orders that:

FINDINGS OF FACT

Procedural History

1. On January 21, 2014, Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. ("AEPCO" or "Cooperative") filed an application with the Commission requesting authorization to obtain two unsecured committed revolving lines of credit ("LOCs") in a combined amount of \$100 million.
2. Simultaneously, in a related Docket, AEPCO and Southwest Transmission Cooperative, Inc. ("SWTC") (collectively "Cooperatives") filed a Joint Application seeking: (i) Commission authorization for a merger, with AEPCO as the surviving generation and transmission cooperative, and (ii) replacement of the Cooperatives' current mortgages with an Indenture. The requested revolving LOCs are intended to improve AEPCO's and the Cooperatives' post-merger credit profiles by increasing liquidity and providing access to committed funds that will afford greater short-term financial flexibility.¹

¹ Docket Nos. E-01773A-14-0018 and E-04100A-14-0018 ("Merger Docket").

1 3. On February 12, 2014, AEPCO filed a Request for Expedited Processing, in which
2 AEPCO states that it learned after filing its Application that the rating agencies are unlikely to
3 consider the proposed LOCs in calculating the Cooperatives' liquidity unless the Commission
4 approves the Application. Thus, AEPCO requests that the Commission expedite the instant docket so
5 that the LOCs can be considered in advance of the Merger Docket, at the Commission's April 2014
6 Open Meeting. Given its request, AEPCO agreed to waive the 10-day period for filing exceptions to a
7 Recommended Order in this matter.

8 4. On February 28, 2014, AEPCO filed an affidavit of publication verifying public notice
9 of its Application was published in *The Arizona Daily Star* and *The Kingman Daily Miner* on
10 February 25, 2014.²

11 5. On March 14, 2014, the Commission's Utilities Division ("Staff") filed its Staff
12 Report recommending approval of the requested authorization.

13 6. On March 21, 2014, AEPCO filed Comments on Staff Report, noting three
14 clarifications to Staff's observations and recommendations.

15 **Background**

16 7. AEPCO is an Arizona public service corporation and Class "A" not-for-profit, electric
17 generation cooperative located in Benson, Arizona. AEPCO provides power and wholesale energy
18 primarily to six Class A member distribution cooperatives – Anza Electric Cooperative, Duncan
19 Valley Electric Cooperative, Graham County Electric Cooperative, Mohave Electric Cooperative,
20 Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative and Trico Electric Cooperative, under the terms of all-
21 requirements or partial-requirements capacity and energy agreements. In addition, Valley Electric
22 Association ("VEA") is a Class D member. VEA does not have either a partial or all-requirements
23 contract with AEPCO, but has an agreement with AEPCO under which AEPCO provides scheduling
24 and trading services as well as economy energy purchases.

25 8. AEPCO's current rates were approved in Decision No. 74173 (October 25, 2013).

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28 ² *The Arizona Daily Star* is a newspaper of general circulation in Pima County, Arizona, and *The Kingman Daily Miner* is
a newspaper of general circulation in the City of Kingman, Mohave County, Arizona.

1 9. SWTC was formed as a not-for-profit transmission-only cooperative as part of a
2 restructuring undertaken by AEPCO in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The Commission approved
3 the restructuring in Decision No. 63868 (July 25, 2001), and authorized the transfer of AEPCO's
4 transmission assets and the transmission portion of AEPCO's Certificate of Convenience and
5 Necessity ("CC&N") to SWTC. In the Merger Docket, the Cooperatives would be re-united with
6 AEPCO as the surviving entity.

7 10. The Staff Report indicates that AEPCO is currently in compliance with Commission
8 Rules and Orders.³

9 **The Application**

10 11. This Application requests authorization to obtain two unsecured committed revolving
11 LOCs in the combined amount of \$100 million. The LOCs will be provided by the National Rural
12 Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation ("CFC") and CoBank, each with a \$50 million
13 commitment. The facilities will terminate five years from closing, and draws made on the facilities
14 may be voluntarily prepaid and redrawn at any time prior to the termination date.

15 12. The facility from CFC includes a renewal option for up to two one-year extensions,
16 subject to the consent of CFC. CoBank requires that AEPCO maintain a times interest earned ratio
17 ("TIER") of 1.10, and CFC requires a Debt Service Coverage ("DSC") ratio of at least 1.0. Both the
18 CFC and CoBank assess an annual facility fee based on their respective \$50 million credit facility
19 commitment.

20 13. The interest rate on the LOCs borrowings and the facility fee to be assessed by CFC
21 and CoBank will depend on the credit rating assigned AEPCO by the rating agencies. Interest rates
22 are to be calculated based on London Interbank Offered Rate ("LIBOR") plus a margin. According to
23 the Staff Report, based upon the credit ratings that AEPCO receives and the maturity length of the
24 LIBOR loan draw (i.e., 3-month, 6-month or 12-month), interest rates could range from 1.08 percent
25 to 1.81 percent per annum based upon current LIBOR rates.

26 14. In the Application, AEPCO states that the Cooperatives are seeking to enhance and
27

28 ³ Staff Report at 1.

1 expedite their access to a broader base of private and public loan funds, at the lowest available cost,
2 in order to finance necessary generation and transmission projects as well as to improve their ability
3 to meet future electricity supply and delivery challenges.⁴ AEPCO asserts that the proposed LOCs
4 further those goals by (1) improving AEPCO's and the Cooperatives' post-merger combined credit
5 profiles, (2) establishing broader, more diversified banking relationships, and (3) providing access to
6 committed funds that will afford greater short-term financial flexibility. AEPCO anticipates that the
7 interest rates under these LOCs will be lower than AEPCO's current financing rates.

8 15. In the Merger Docket, AEPCO and SWTC seek to transition from an historic reliance
9 on mortgage-based, federally-funded financing provided by the Rural Utilities Service ("RUS") to a
10 broader base of financing secured under an Indenture.⁵ To make this transition, the Cooperatives
11 assert that they must obtain an investment grade credit rating from two credit rating agencies, with
12 liquidity being one factor to be considered in that process.⁶

13 16. AEPCO asserts that the LOCs will help improve AEPCO's credit profile by increasing
14 its liquidity. According to AEPCO, the median liquidity coverage ratio for a rated generation and
15 transmission cooperative is more than 200 days.⁷ AEPCO states that the short-term uncommitted line
16 of credit which AEPCO currently maintains does not count toward meeting this liquidity calculation,
17 and as a result, AEPCO's current liquidity is estimated at only 65 days. AEPCO states that because
18 the committed LOCs will count towards the liquidity calculation, these facilities will help qualify
19 AEPCO for an investment grade credit rating. AEPCO further states that having an investment grade
20 credit rating is essential to obtaining the Indenture it seeks and to the pricing of AEPCO's future
21 short-term and long-term debt financings.

22 17. In its Application, AEPCO states that in addition to addressing liquidity, the combined
23 amount of the LOCs is based on AEPCO's analysis of its post-merger credit and interim financing
24 needs. Upon closing these LOCs, AEPCO states that it will immediately terminate its current short-
25 term, uncommitted line of credit, and in the future will use the committed LOCs to provide interim

26 ⁴ Application at 2.

27 ⁵ Docket Nos. E-01773A-14-0018 and E-04100A-14-0018, at 4-5.

28 ⁶ Staff Report at 2.

⁷ Liquidity is measured by comparing operating expenses to cash and cash equivalents plus available committed lines of credit and commercial paper.

1 financing until permanent long-term financing for future capital projects is obtained.

2 18. Given the connection between the LOCs and the Indenture sought in the Merger
3 Docket, AEPCO requests that the Commission approve the LOC Application prior to considering the
4 Merger Docket. AEPCO anticipates that early approval of the instant Application will result in more
5 favorable financing terms, and thus, requested approval as soon as possible.⁸

6 **Staff Analysis and Recommendations**

7 19. Staff performed a financial analysis based on financial information for the year ended
8 December 31, 2012.

9 20. As of December 31, 2012, AEPCO's capital structure consisted of 5.5 percent short-
10 term debt, 60.4 percent long-term debt, and 34.1 percent equity. Staff notes that authorization of the
11 proposed unsecured committed revolving LOCs will not affect AEPCO's capital structure until the
12 Cooperative draws upon the facilities.

13 21. Staff's analysis indicates that for the year ended December 31, 2012, AEPCO's DSC
14 was 1.39.⁹ The pro forma DSC, assuming the repayment of principal associated with a capital lease
15 obligation, indicates a DSC of 1.29.¹⁰ Staff concludes that the pro forma DSC analysis shows that
16 AEPCO has sufficient funds to meet all debt obligations and meets the minimum 1.0 DSC covenant
17 required by CFC.

18 22. Staff's analysis shows that for the year ended December 31, 2012, AEPCO's TIER
19 was 1.71.¹¹ The pro forma TIER, assuming the repayment of the principal on a capital lease, shows a
20 TIER of 1.71. Staff concludes that the pro forma TIER analysis shows that AEPCO has sufficient
21 funds to meet all debt obligations and meets the minimum 1.1 TIER covenant required by CoBank.

22 23. The proposed LOCs are unsecured, and as such do not require the encumbrance of
23 AEPCO's assets or revenues.

24 ⁸ Application at 3.

25 ⁹ DSC represents the number of times internally generated cash will cover required principal and interest payments on
26 short-term and long-term debt. A DSC greater than 1.0 indicates that cash flow from operations is sufficient to cover debt
27 obligations. A DSC less than 1.0 means that debt service obligations cannot be met by cash generated from operations
28 and that another source of funds may be needed to avoid default under certain conditions.

¹⁰ Staff Report at 4.

¹¹ TIER represents the number of times operating earnings over interest expense on short-term and long-term debt. A
TIER greater than 1.0 means that operating income is greater than interest expense. A TIER less than 1.0 is not
sustainable in the long-term but does not mean that debt obligations cannot be met in the short-term.

1 24. Staff concludes that the issuance of the two proposed unsecured, committed revolving
2 LOCs for the purposes stated in the Application is within AEPCO's corporate powers, is compatible
3 with the public interest, is consistent with sound financial practices and will not impair its ability to
4 provide services.¹²

5 25. Staff recommends authorizing AEPCO's request to enter into two unsecured
6 committed LOCs in an amount not to exceed \$100 million in the aggregate. Staff further
7 recommends:

8 (a) Authorizing AEPCO to engage in any transactions and to execute any documents
9 necessary to effectuate the authorization granted in this proceeding;

10 (b) That AEPCO provide to the Utilities Division Director, a copy of the loan
11 documents executed pursuant to the authorizations granted in this proceeding, within 30 days of the
12 execution of the loan, and also file a letter in Docket Control verifying that such documents have
13 been provided to the Utilities Division; and

14 (c) That any unused authorizations to issue debt granted in this proceeding terminate
15 within five and a half years of a Decision in this docket.

16 26. In its March 21, 2014 Comments to the Staff Report, AEPCO notes that the CFC line
17 of credit terminates five years from closing, but also includes a renewal option for up to two one-
18 year terms, as Staff recognizes in the Staff Report. With respect to Staff's recommendation that any
19 unused authority terminate within five-and-a-half years, AEPCO states its understanding that
20 approval of the LOCs would include use of the renewal option, such that the 5.5 year termination
21 recommendation would not preclude exercise of the CFC option to renew. AEPCO request
22 clarification of that point in the Order.¹³

23 **Conclusion**

24 27. The proposed LOCs are necessary to augment AEPCO's liquidity which will place it
25 in a position to obtain an investment grade rating and allow it a better opportunity to take advantage
26 of other diverse and fiscally-attractive financing opportunities. Based on AEPCO's and Staff's
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28 ¹² Staff Report at 4.

¹³ AEPCO Comments at 2.

1 analyses, and the lenders' loan covenants requiring a minimum DSC and TIER, we find that
2 AEPCO's request, and Staff's recommendations to be reasonable, and we approve them.

3 **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

4 1. AEPCO is a public service corporation within the meaning of Article XV of the
5 Arizona Constitution and A.R.S. §§ 40-285, 40-301, 40-302, and 40-303.

6 2. The Commission has jurisdiction over AEPCO and of the subject matter of the
7 Application.

8 3. Notice of the Application was given in accordance with the law.

9 4. The authorizations granted herein are for lawful purposes which are within the
10 corporate powers of AEPCO, are compatible with the public interest, with sound financial practices,
11 and with the proper performance by AEPCO of service as a public service corporation, and will not
12 impair AEPCO's ability to perform that service.

13 5. The financing approved herein is for the purposes stated in the Application, and is
14 reasonably necessary for those purposes.

15 **ORDER**

16 IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. is hereby
17 authorized to borrow up to a combined amount of \$100,000,000, from the National Rural Utilities
18 Cooperative Finance Corporation and CoBank in the form of unsecured committed revolving lines of
19 credit.

20 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that such finance authority shall be expressly contingent upon
21 Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.'s use of the proceeds for the purposes stated in its
22 Application and approved herein.

23 IT IS FURTHER ODRERED that any unused authority granted herein shall expire five and
24 one half years from the effective date of this Decision, except that this condition shall not prevent
25 Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. from exercising the two one-year renewal options offered
26 pursuant to the terms of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation line of credit.

27 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. may engage in
28 any transaction and to execute any documents necessary to effectuate the authorizations granted

1 herein.

2 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that approval of the financing set forth herein does not
3 constitute or imply approval or disapproval by the Commission of any particular expenditure of the
4 proceeds derived thereby for purposes of establishing just and reasonable rates.

5 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. shall provide the
6 Utilities Division Director a copy of any loan documents executed pursuant to the authorizations
7 granted herein, within 30 days of the execution of the loan, and shall file with Docket Control, as a
8 compliance item in this Docket, a letter verifying that such documents have been provided to the
9 Utilities Division.

10 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Decision shall become effective immediately.

11 BY ORDER OF THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION.

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14 CHAIRMAN

COMMISSIONER

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16 COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

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18 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, JODI JERICH, Executive
19 Director of the Arizona Corporation Commission, have
20 hereunto set my hand and caused the official seal of the
21 Commission to be affixed at the Capitol, in the City of Phoenix,
22 this _____ day of _____ 2014.

23 JODI JERICH
24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

25 DISSENT _____

26 DISSENT _____
27 JR:ru

1 SERVICE LIST FOR: ARIZONA ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE, INC.

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