

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

CHAIRMAN  
Martin P. Honigberg

COMMISSIONERS  
Kathryn M. Bailey  
Michael S. Giaimo

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Debra A. Howland



**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
21 S. Fruit Street, Suite 10  
Concord, N.H. 03301-2429

TDD Access: Relay NH  
1-800-735-2964

Tel. (603) 271-2431

FAX (603) 271-3878

Website:  
[www.puc.nh.gov](http://www.puc.nh.gov)

November 29, 2017

Susan S. Geiger, Esq.  
Orr & Reno  
45 South Main Street  
Concord, NH 03302-3550

Re: DT 16-872, Consolidated Communications Holdings, Inc.  
Joint Petition for Findings in Furtherance of the Acquisition of FairPoint  
Communications, Inc. and its New Hampshire Operating Subsidiaries  
Granting Motion for Protective Order and Confidential Treatment

Dear Ms. Geiger:

On October 3, 2017, Consolidated Communications Holdings, Inc. (CCHI) filed a Motion for Protective Order and Confidential Treatment (Motion) with respect to its plan to achieve targeted merger efficiencies (Synergies Plan). CCHI stated that the Synergies Plan contains highly confidential information, and was provided to the Commission and the Labor Intervenors in accordance with Section II. D.17 of the Revised Stipulation and Settlement Agreement approved by the Commission in Order No. 26, 022 (May 31, 2017). No objection to the Motion was filed within the ten-day period provided for under N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 203.07(e).

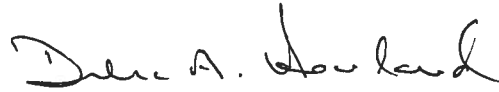
According to CCHI, the Synergies Plan contains private, competitively-sensitive personnel and commercial information which it safeguards and does not publicly disclose. CCHI asserted that it is engaged in an intensely competitive industry over which the Commission has relatively limited regulatory authority, and that disclosure of the information would be an invasion of its privacy and would be competitively harmful if its competitors were able to obtain access to the information. CCHI maintained there is little, if any, public interest in disclosure of the information, given that there is only one intervenor group in the docket. CCHI argued that, even if a public interest in disclosure does exist, that interest is outweighed by its interest in maintaining the confidentiality of the information. CCHI therefore concluded that the non-public information contained in the Synergies Plan should be afforded confidential treatment under RSA 91-A:5, IV.

The Commission has reviewed the Motion and has determined that the Synergies Plan contains "confidential, commercial, or financial information" exempt from public disclosure under RSA 91-A:5, IV and Puc 203.08. Based on the applicable three-step balancing test, as described in Order No. 26,040 (July 11, 2017) at 9, the Commission determined that the Synergies Plan meets the standards for exemption from public disclosure and should be afforded confidential

treatment, as it is non-public, commercially-sensitive financial and staffing information of a company engaged in a competitive industry subject to limited state regulation.

Accordingly, CCHI's Motion for Protective Order and Confidential Treatment filed on October 3, 2017 is granted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra A. Howland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D".

Debra A. Howland  
Executive Director

cc: Docket File  
Service List