



Philadelphia Gas Works

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June 9, 2010

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Room B-20, North Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

Re: Joseph Sharkey v. PGW, Docket No. C – 2010 – 2176892

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §5.61, the Philadelphia Gas Works ("PGW") hereby files the original of its Preliminary Objections to the Complaint in the above captioned matter.

If additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned. Thank you for your assistance in the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Danielle Ross", is written over a white background. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Danielle Ross

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Joseph Sharkey
Anne Marie Cromley (PGW Mail)
Linda Pereira (PGW Mail)

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Joseph Sharkey

v.

Philadelphia Gas Works

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Docket No. C – 2010 – 2176892

NOTICE TO PLEAD

To: Joseph Sharkey, Complainant

Pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §5.101, you are hereby notified to file a written response to the enclosed Preliminary Objections and Motion to Strike, within ten (10) days from service hereof or you may be deemed to be in default and relevant facts stated in these pleadings may be deemed admitted and a judgment may be entered against you.

Respectfully submitted,

June 9, 2010



Laureto Farinas, Esquire
Philadelphia Gas Works
800 W. Montgomery Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 684-6982

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Joseph Sharkey

v.

Philadelphia Gas Works

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Docket No. C – 2010 – 2176892

**Philadelphia Gas Works’
Preliminary Objections and
Motion to Strike Impertinent Matter**

Pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §5.101, the Philadelphia Gas Works (“PGW”) hereby files its Preliminary Objections to the Complaint filed in the above captioned matter on the grounds that the Commission lacks jurisdiction over the subject matter of the Complaint, and that the Complaint includes impertinent matter in its requested relief to remove the lien, and moves to strike the requested relief as “impertinent matter” pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §§5.101(a)(1) and (2).

In support of its preliminary objection and motion to strike, PGW hereby avers the following:

1. On or about May 14, 2010, the Complainant filed a formal complaint against PGW with the Commission under Docket No. C-2010-2176892, regarding unpaid debt for gas service to 1831 E. Madison Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1831 Madison Street).
2. The Complaint avers that he was not a gas customer at Madison Street, but rather his tenant, Jennielee Ortiz-Rivas lived there and used gas from October 2008 through August 2009.
3. For the period from October 31, 2008 through August 6, 2009. Ms. Ortiz-Rivas Customer of Record for the PGW gas account for gas service to 1831 Madison Street and left with a final bill exceeding \$5,000. Ms. Ortiz-Rivas did not dispute the accuracy of her final bill.
4. Of Ms. Ortiz-Rivas’ final bill, \$2,306.44 was for gas usage at 1831 Madison Street.

5. The City of Philadelphia, as owner of PGW has filed a municipal lien upon 1831 Madison Street for the unpaid debt of Ms. Ortiz-Rivas, pursuant to the Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law, Act 153 of 1923, P.L. 207 53 P.S. §7101, et seq.

6. Pursuant to the Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law, Act 153 of 1923, P.L. 207 53 P.S. §7101, the City of Philadelphia, as owner of PGW, has the right to collect on municipal claims owed to PGW for gas service to a Service Address.

7. The Complaint avers that PGW is holding the Complainant responsible for the unpaid debt of his tenant. PGW has not billed the Complainant on an account in his name for the unpaid debt of Ms. Ortiz-Rivas.

8. The Complaint requests relief in the form of a Commission order to PGW to not make the Complainant responsible for the outstanding unpaid balance for gas service rendered to 1831 Madison Street and (presumably) to do so by having the lien removed.

9. Under the Commission's Rules of Administrative Practice and Procedure at 52 Pa. Code §5.101, the treatment of preliminary objections is comparable to that of Pennsylvania civil practice. (See: Order Sustaining Preliminary Objection in *Paul W. Fricker v. PECO Energy Company*, Docket No. C-2009-2094757 (May 21, 2009)), *Nathaniel Lewis Mooney, Jr. v. PGW*, C-2009-2134673 (May 20, 2010)

The Commission's regulations provide, in relevant part:

(a) *Grounds.* Preliminary objections are available to parties and may be filed in response to a pleading except motions and prior preliminary objections. Preliminary objections...must state specifically the legal and factual grounds relied upon and be limited to the following:

(1) Lack of Commission jurisdiction or improper service of the pleading initiating the proceeding.

(2) Failure of a pleading to conform to this chapter or the inclusion of scandalous or impertinent matter.
52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (2)¹

10. In this case, as the Complaint states that the bills that are the subject of the lien were from gas service under his tenant's PGW account. The Complainant opines that under circumstances, he should not be held responsible.

11. Pursuant to the Natural Gas Choice and Competition Act, 66 Pa. C.S.A Section 2201 et seq., section 2212(n), which specifically provides, "Nothing contained in this title shall abrogate the power of a city natural gas distribution operation to collect delinquent receivables through the imposition of liens pursuant to section 3 of the act of May 16, 1923 (P.L. 207, No. 153), referred to as the Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law, or otherwise." Thus, under 66 Pa. C.S.A Section 2212(n), the Commission has no jurisdiction over the filing of such a lien.²

12. Pursuant to the Responsible Utility Customer Protection Act at 66 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 1414, which states: "[a] city natural gas distribution operation furnishing gas service to a property is entitled to impose or assess a municipal claim against the property and file as liens of record claims for unpaid natural gas distribution service and other related costs, including natural gas supply," clarifies and confirms such rights to impose a lien.

13. The Complainant disputes the imposition of the lien because he did not incur the debt for gas service.

14. The nature of a lien is such that it encumbers the real estate, regardless who caused the event, which results in the imposition of a municipal claim. PGW may collect as a municipal claim, unpaid debt for gas service rendered, even when the gas service was not rendered to the owner of the property. *Newberry Township v. Ray Stambaugh*, 848 A.2d 173; (Pa. Cmwlth. 2000)

¹ 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (2) emphasis added.

² 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (1)

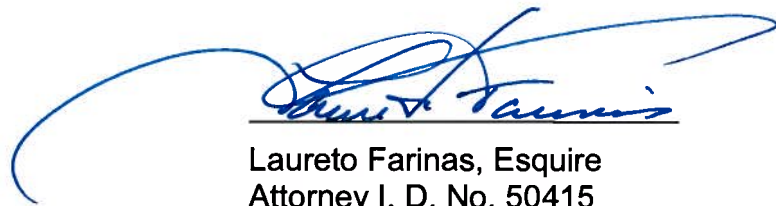
15. In the instant matter, the Complainant simply wishes not to be responsible for the gas he did not use. As PGW has not held the Complainant personally responsible for the unpaid balance for gas service rendered to 1831 Madison Street, the Commission need not grant the requested relief of having the Complainant not be personally responsible for the unpaid balance for gas service.

16. A prayer for relief from a condition that does not exist (held personally responsible for unpaid balance for gas service rendered to another) is not recoverable in the cause of action before this Commission. It is irrelevant to the instant cause of action and therefore "impertinent matter" within the use and meaning of 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (2) and, should be stricken from the Complaint pursuant to Pa. Code §5.101(a)(2).

Wherefore, PGW respectfully requests that this Commission sustain PGW's preliminary objections to the Complaint and dismiss the Complaint for lack of jurisdiction and strike off the requested relief as impertinent matter.

Respectfully submitted,

June 9, 2010

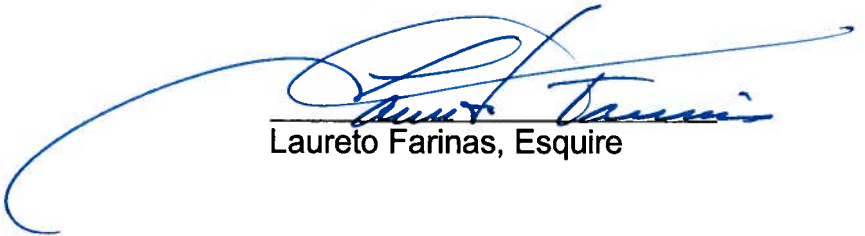


Laureto Farinas, Esquire
Attorney I. D. No. 50415
Philadelphia Gas Works
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(215) 684-6982

VERIFICATION

I, Laureto Farinas, hereby declare that I am counsel for the Philadelphia Gas Works. I am authorized to make this verification on its behalf. The facts set forth in the foregoing Answer are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I expect to be able to prove these facts at a hearing held in this matter. This verification is made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa. C.S. §4904, concerning false statements to authorities.

June 9, 2010



Laureto Farinas, Esquire

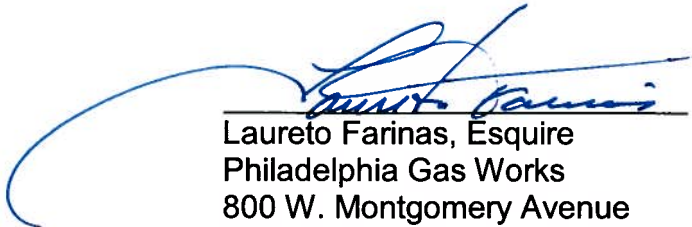
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I HAVE THIS DAY SERVED A TRUE COPY OF THE FOREGOING DOCUMENT UPON THE PARTICIPANTS LISTED BELOW, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF 52 PA CODE §1.54 (RELATING TO SERVICE BY A PARTICIPANT).

For Complainant:

Mr. Joseph Sharkey
75 Adams Street
East Rockaway, NY 11518

June 9, 2010


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