



**PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS**

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July 7, 2011

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary  
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission  
P.O. Box 3265  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

**Re: Obioma Iro-Nwokeukwu v. PGW, Docket No. C – 2011 – 2247079**

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §5.101, 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 blue ink that reads "Danielle Ross".

Danielle Ross

Enclosure

cc: Obioma Iro-Nwokeukwu (Regular Mail)  
Anne Marie Cromley (PGW Mail)  
Linda Pereira (PGW Mail)

**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**Obioma Iro-Nwokeukwu**

**v.**

**Philadelphia Gas Works**

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**Docket No. C – 2011 – 2247079**

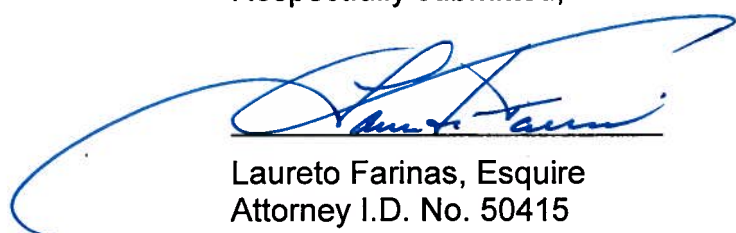
**NOTICE TO PLEAD**

**To: Obioma Iro-Nwokeukwu, 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,

July 7, 2011



Laureto Farinas, Esquire  
Attorney I.D. No. 50415  
Philadelphia Gas Works  
800 W. Montgomery Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19122  
(215) 684-6982

**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

<b>Obioma Iro-Nwokeukwu</b>	:	
	:	
v.	:	<b>Docket No. C – 2011 – 2247079</b>
	:	
<b>Philadelphia Gas Works</b>	:	

**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 June 3, 2011, the Complainant filed a formal complaint against PGW with the Commission under the above captioned matter, regarding unpaid debt for gas service to 51 E. High Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Subject Property).
2. The Complainant avers that PGW notified her of the lien after her tenant moved from the Subject Property.
3. For the following period from June 2010 through January 2011, the Complainant’s tenant owed \$1,449.95 for unpaid gas service to the Subject Property under an account where the Complainant’s tenant was the Customer of Record.

4. The City of Philadelphia, as owner of PGW, has filed municipal liens upon the Subject Property for the unpaid debt for gas service to the Subject Properties on the accounts of the Complainant's Commercial tenants, pursuant to the Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law, Act 153 of 1923, P.L. 207 53 P.S. §7101, et seq. (Municipal Lien Act), Under the Municipal Lien Act, 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.

5. The Complainant requests relief in the form of a Commission order to PGW to remove the liens against the Subject Property.

6. 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))

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)<sup>1</sup>

7. In this case, as the Complaint states that the bills that are the subject of the liens were from gas service under the accounts of her tenants.

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<sup>1</sup> 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (2) emphasis added.

The Complainant opines that under circumstances, she should not be held responsible.

8. 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.<sup>2</sup> *Cornelia Strowder v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, 2002 WL 32069511 (2002), *Debra Williams Lawrence v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-20066672, Final Order entered January 22, 2007, *Tina L. Francis-Young v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2008-2029672, Final Order entered February 23, 2009, *Dung Phat, LLC v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2009-2135667, Final Order entered January 13, 2010, *Nathaniel Lewis Mooney v. PGW*, Docket No. C-2009-2134673, Final Decision and Order entered January 13, 2010, *David Golan v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2009-2138115, Final Order entered February 4, 2010, *2020 West Passyunk Avenue Inc. v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2009-2138727, Final Order entered February 4, 2010, *Jean Charles v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2009-2138638, Final Order entered February 5, 2010, *William Petravich v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2010-2188984, Final Order entered February 10, 2011, *Avner and Gail Yamin v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2011-2221883, Final Order entered June 29, 2011.

9. 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (1)

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

11. 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)

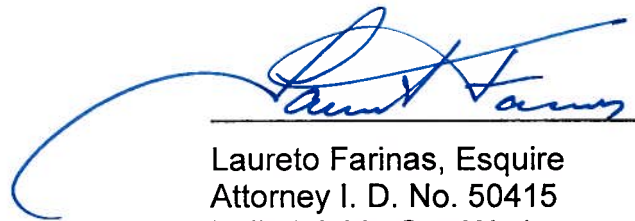
12. In the instant matter, the Complainant simply wishes her property to not be held responsible for the gas the Complainant did not use and for the Commission to order the removal of the liens.

13. As the Commission is without jurisdiction to decide on matters involving the imposition of the municipal liens, the Complainant's request for relief is "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,

July 7, 2011



Laureto Farinas, Esquire  
Attorney I. D. No. 50415  
Philadelphia Gas Works  
800 W. Montgomery Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19122  
(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.

July 7, 2011



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:

Ms. Obioma Iro-Nwokeukwu  
510 Burnham Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19119

July 7, 2011



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Philadelphia Gas Works  
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