



PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS

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June 25, 2013

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

Re: Jennie Carter Harris v. PGW, Docket No. F – 2013 – 2367030

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,


Danielle Leva

Enclosure

cc: Jennie Carter Harris (Regular Mail)
Anne Marie Cromley (PGW Mail)
Linda Pereira (PGW Mail)

BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Jennie Carter Harris

v.

Philadelphia Gas Works

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: Docket No. F – 2013– 2367030
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NOTICE TO PLEAD

To: Jennie Carter Harris, 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 25, 2013



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

Jennie Carter Harris

v.

Philadelphia Gas Works

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Docket No. F – 2013 – 2367030

**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 (or forbear collection of) 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 22, 2013, the Complainant filed a formal complaint against PGW with the Commission under the above captioned matter, regarding unpaid debt for gas service to 1307 N. 53rd Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Subject Property).
2. The Complainant, Jennie Carter Harris, avers that the unpaid gas service to the Subject Property is under an account of her tenant.
3. The Complainant avers that her tenant should be held responsible for the debt because she registered the Subject Property under the Landlord Cooperation Program (LCP). By way of further answer, the lien process began February 15, 2013. The Subject Property was not registered in LCP until February 25, 2013.

4. For the period from January 2011 through January 2012, Danielle Smith was the Customer of Record at the Subject Property and owed a total of \$1,252.52 for unpaid gas service to the Subject Property.

5. The City of Philadelphia, as owner of PGW, has filed a municipal lien upon the Subject Property for the unpaid debt for gas service on the account of the customer or record, 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.

6. The Complainant requests relief in the form of a Commission order to PGW to remove the lien against the property.

7. 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)¹

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

8. In this case, as the Complaint states that the bills that are the subject of the lien were from gas service under her tenant's account and she should not be held responsible.

9. 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

10. The Commission has repeatedly recognized its lack of subject matter jurisdiction in cases involving a dispute over a municipal lien placed upon a property. *Cornelia Strowder v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, 2002 WL 32069511 (2002), *Debra Williams Lawrence v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket Number C-20066672 (Final Order entered January 22, 2007), *Tina L. Francis-Young v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket Number C-2008-2029672, (Final Order entered February 23, 2009), *Dung Phat, LLC v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket Number C-2009-2135667, (Final Order entered January 13, 2010), *Nathaniel Lewis Mooney v. PGW*, Docket No. C-2009-2134673, (Final Opinion and Order entered January 13, 2010), *David Golan v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket Number C-2009-2138115, (Final Order entered February 4, 2010), *2020 West Passyunk Avenue Inc. v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket Number C-2009-2138727, (Final Order entered February 4, 2010), *Jean Charles v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket Number C-2009-2138638, (Final Order entered February 5, 2010), *Agron Vata v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2009-2149960 (Final Order entered August 24, 2010), *William Petravich v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2010-2188984, (Final Opinion and Order entered February 10, 2011), *Avner and Gail Yamin v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2011-2221883, (Final Order entered June 29, 2011), *Ardelle Jackson v. Philadelphia*

² 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (1)

Gas Works, Docket No. C-2009-2119940 (Final Opinion and Order entered July 1, 2011)

11. 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.

12. 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).

13. The Commission has repeatedly recognized its lack of subject matter jurisdiction in cases involving Landlord Disputes over Landlord Cooperation Program. The PUC adopted the ALJ's Initial Decision (June 28, 2012) finding that disputes involving PGW and Landlords over the enforcement of rules governing the Landlord Cooperation Program (LCP) are beyond the PUC's jurisdiction, since the "contract" between PGW and each Landlord for the LCP is a private contract and does not rise from the public rights embodied in the Pennsylvania Public utility Codes. In this case the Complainant began the registration for LCP but did not complete the process and thus was not afforded the protections of LCP. *Eric Carter v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2012-2299188, (Final Order entered August 16, 2012).

14. As the Commission is without jurisdiction to decide on matters involving the imposition of the municipal lien, 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.³

³ 52 Pa. Code §5.101(a) (2)

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 25, 2013


Laureto Farinas, Esquire

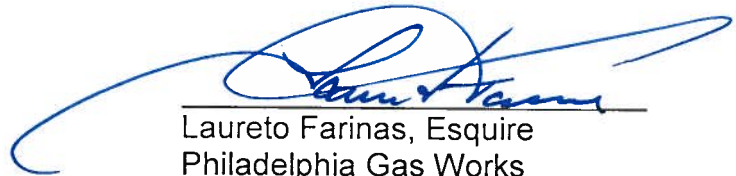
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

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. Jennie Carter Harris
907 Guenther Avenue
Yeadon, PA 19050

June 25, 2013



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