

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, et al.

v.

Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.

Public Meeting – December 3, 2015

2468056 – OSA

Docket Nos. R-2015-2468056

C-2015-2473682

C-2015-2477816

C-2015-2476623

C-2015-2477120

C-2015-2484454

STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER PAMELA A. WITMER

Before the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission today is the Opinion and Order that, in part, approves the Joint Petition for Partial Settlement (Settlement) entered into by Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (Columbia or Company), the Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement (I&E), the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA), Columbia Industrial Intervenors (CII), Dominion Retail, Inc., Shipley Energy Company and Interstate Gas Supply (collectively, NGS Parties), the Coalition for Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania (CAUSE-PA) and the Retail Energy Supply Association (RESA) (collectively referred to as “Joint Petitioners”).¹

Part of the Settlement includes three new proposals designed to expand the availability of natural gas service in Columbia’s service territory and complement its currently effective Pilot Rider New Area Service (NAS). As articulated in the Company’s Statement of Support, these proposals were partly made in response to my Statement in October of 2014² encouraging Columbia to do more to expand the availability of natural gas service when opportunities arise.³

The proposals in today’s Settlement include: (1) a footage allowance of 150 feet of main line per applicant without the need for a Net Present Value (NPV) analysis; (2) an allowance of 150 feet of service line in normal situations for customers served in those portions of Columbia’s service territory where the Company owns the service line; and (3) reimbursement of up to \$1,000 for the installation of house piping on projects when projected revenues exceed projected costs by a certain threshold. In addition, and in response to a suggestion by the OCA that data be collected so these programs can be evaluated going forward, the Settlement incorporates a number of reporting requirements related to these service expansion proposals.

¹ The Pennsylvania State University (PSU), an active party in the proceeding, indicated that it does not oppose the Settlement. See Columbia Statement in Support at 1.

² See *Statement of Commissioner Pamela A. Witmer re: Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Office of Consumer Advocate, Office of Small Business Advocate v. Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.*, Docket Nos. R-2014-2407345, C-2014-2410197, C-2014-2415136 (Oct. 23, 2014).

³ See Columbia Statement in Support at 21.

Because Pilot Rider NAS only spreads the cost of a customer's deposit over time and does not reduce the total cost of the deposit, I applaud the addition of these complementary proposals. When effectuated, they should enable more individuals to receive natural gas service and they serve as a positive step in removing barriers for customers that desire to convert to natural gas. I believe it is critically important to promote innovative programs to encourage the extension of natural gas into underserved and unserved areas of the Commonwealth. To that end, I appreciate the Company's responsiveness in creating more expansive opportunities for conversion, and I look forward to their implementation.

DATE: December 3, 2015


PAMELA A. WITMER
COMMISSIONER