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October 26, 2017

VIA E-FILING

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street, 2nd Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Christopher L. Macey v. West Penn Power Company
Docket No. C-2017-2628021

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Attached please find the Preliminary Objections of West Penn Power Company in the above-referenced matter. This document has been served on the Complainant as shown in the Certificate of Service.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,


Lauren M. Lepkoski

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Enclosures

c: As per Certificate of Service

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

CHRISTOPHER L. MACEY	:	
	:	
v.	:	Docket No. C-2017-2628021
	:	
WEST PENN POWER COMPANY	:	

NOTICE TO PLEAD

TO: Christopher L. Macey

Pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 5.101 you are hereby notified that if you do not file a reply to the enclosed Preliminary Objections of West Penn Power Company within ten (10) days from service of this notice, the facts set forth by West Penn Power Company in the Preliminary Objections may be deemed to be admitted, thereby requiring no other proof. All pleadings, such as a Reply to Objection, must be filed with the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, with a copy service to counsel for West Penn Power Company, and where applicable, the Administrative Law Judge presiding over the case.


File with:

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

With a copy to:

Lauren M. Lepkoski
Tori L. Giesler
FirstEnergy Service Company
2800 Pottsville Pike
P.O. Box 16001
Reading, Pennsylvania 19612-6001

Date: October 26, 2017


Lauren M. Lepkoski, Esquire
Tori L. Giesler, Esquire

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

CHRISTOPHER L. MACEY	:	
	:	
v.	:	Docket No. C-2017-2628021
	:	
WEST PENN POWER COMPANY	:	

**PRELIMINARY OBJECTION TO THE FORMAL COMPLAINT OF
CHRISTOPHER L. MACEY**

TO THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION:

AND NOW, West Penn Power Company ("West Penn" or the "Company"), by and through its counsel, Lauren M. Lepkoski and Tori L. Giesler, files this Preliminary Objection pursuant to Section 5.101(a) of Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission ("Commission") regulations, 52 Pa. Code § 5.101(a)(1), and in support thereof, avers as follows:

I. Introduction

1. In his recently filed Formal Complaint, Christopher L. Macey ("Complainant"), who resides at 201 Highland Avenue S, Oakdale, Pennsylvania 15071 ("Service Location") alleges that he does not want a smart meter installed at the Service Location. (Formal Complaint ¶¶ 4, 5.) The Complainant states, in part, as requested relief, "I am requesting that the judge compel West Penn Power/FirstEnergy to delay installation of the Smart Meter to 4th Quarter 2022 for my residence at 201 Highland Avenue S, Oakdale, PA 15071. That will allow me time to retire from my current job, sell the house and move out of the state of Pennsylvania. The PA PUC website states that smart meters must be in place by 2023, and my request is totally compliant with the policy of the PUC. This was discussed with the utility by my phone contact with FirstEnergy Smart meter office, and I was simply told that FirstEnergy had six million meters to install, and that exceptions like mine cannot be tolerated. That is a very unhealthy attitude that FirstEnergy

maintains toward their customers” and “[d]efer any charges for a smart meter on my bill until such time that a smart meter is actually installed at the above residence.” (Formal Complaint ¶ 5.)

2. The Company is in the process of deploying smart meters in its service territory in accordance with Act 129 of 2008 (“Act 129”).¹

3. On July 19, 2016, the Complainant contacted the Company stating that he did not yet have a smart meter and wanted to opt out. The Company representative advised that there is no opt out option. The Complainant then stated that his wife cannot be exposed to radio frequency due to health concerns and the information the Company has regarding the smart meters is a scam. Dispute rights were provided to the Complainant when he indicated that he was not satisfied with the result of his telephone call and indicated that he would contact the Commission. On July 6, 2017, the Complainant sent an email to the Company again reiterating that he wanted to opt out of the smart meter program as his wife is EMF-sensitive and, for health reasons, he does not want a smart meter. He further stated that he would be sending a copy of the email to the Commission. On July 10, 2017, the Company provided a detailed response to the Complainant’s email which included information regarding the Company’s deployment plan, Act 129, the meters the Company is installing, and included various links to resources on the Company’s website as well as the Commission website. The Company’s response also detailed that continued refusal of the smart meter could ultimately lead to a disconnection of his electric service. On September 5, 2017, the Company sent correspondence to the Complainant regarding the installation of a smart meter at the Service Location. On September 14, 2017, the Complainant refused installation of the smart meter. On September 15, 2017, the Company attempted to discuss the installation of the smart

¹ 66 Pa.C.S. § 2806.1 *et seq.* Among other things, Act 129 specifically directed that electric distribution companies with at least 100,000 customers file a smart meter technology procurement and installation plan with the Commission for approval. 66 Pa.C.S. § 2807(f)(1) and (2).

meter with the Complainant and left a voicemail message. On September 15, 2017, the Complainant contacted the Company in response to the voicemail message. He stated to the Company representative that if the Company attempts to install a smart meter at the Service Location, he would contact the sheriff's department and have the Company representative arrested for trespassing. The Complainant was advised that he had the right to file a complaint with the Commission. The Complainant stated that he had filed a complaint in July 2017. As of that time, the Company had not received notice of a complaint, however had received an email from the Complainant, which the Company had responded to. The Complainant then stated he received no response from the Company and it must have gone into his junk or spam folder. On September 19, 2017, the Complainant contacted the Company and stated that he filed an informal complaint with the Commission's Bureau of Consumer Services ("BCS") at Case No. 3543364; however, the Company was not served with a complaint and therefore advised that the Complainant should contact the Commission. On September 29, 2017, a pre-disconnection warning letter was sent to the Complainants pursuant to 66 Pa.C.S. § 1406, 52 Pa. Code § 56.81 and Rules 9 and 20 of the Company's Commission-approved Tariff.² On October 3, 2017, the Complainant contacted the Company stating that he had filed a formal complaint with the Commission. The Company representative verified that the Company had not yet been served with a formal complaint, but once received, the Company would comply with Commission directives. On October 6, 2017, the Commission electronically served the Company with the instant Formal Complaint and termination efforts ceased.

4. As explained in greater detail below, even if all of the facts in the Formal Complaint are accepted as true, they do not constitute a violation of any law which the Commission has

² *West Penn Power Company Retail Electric Service Tariff*, Electric Pa. PUC No. 40, pp. 46, 61, issued May 1, 2015, effective May 3, 2015.

jurisdiction to administer, or of any regulation or order of the Commission, such that relief can be granted. *See* 66 Pa.C.S. § 701.

5. As a result, the Company requests that this Preliminary Objection be granted and that the Commission: (1) strike the Complainant's request for an exemption from the installation of a smart meter; (2) dismiss the Complainant's request for a deferral of smart meter charges; (3) dismiss the Formal Complaint in its entirety with prejudice; and (4) grant the Company such other relief as may be just and reasonable under the circumstances.

II. Background

6. West Penn is an electric distribution company that is certificated as a public utility in Pennsylvania.

7. On July 19, 2016, the Complainant contacted the Company stating that he did not yet have a smart meter and wanted to opt out. The Company representative advised that there is no opt out option. The Complainant then stated that his wife cannot be exposed to radio frequency due to health concerns and the information the Company has regarding the smart meters is a scam. Dispute rights were provided to the Complainant when he indicated that he was not satisfied with the result of his telephone call and indicated that he would contact the Commission. On July 6, 2017, the Complainant sent an email to the Company again reiterating that he wanted to opt out of the smart meter program as his wife is EMF-sensitive and, for health reasons, he does not want a smart meter. He further stated that he would be sending a copy of the email to the Commission. On July 10, 2017, the Company provided a detailed response to the Complainant's email which included information regarding the Company's deployment plan, Act 129, the meters the Company is installing, and included various links to resources on the Company's website as well as the Commission website. The Company's response also detailed that continued refusal of the smart

meter could ultimately lead to a disconnection of his electric service. On September 5, 2017, the Company sent correspondence to the Complainant regarding the installation of a smart meter at the Service Location. On September 14, 2017, the Complainant refused installation of the smart meter. On September 15, 2017, the Company attempted to discuss the installation of the smart meter with the Complainant and left a voicemail message. On September 15, 2017, the Complainant contacted the Company in response to the voicemail message. He stated to the Company representative that if the Company attempts to install a smart meter at the Service Location, he would contact the sheriff's department and have the Company representative arrested for trespassing. The Complainant was advised that he had the right to file a complaint with the Commission. The Complainant stated that he had filed a complaint in July 2017. As of that time, the Company had not received notice of a complaint, however had received an email from the Complainant, which the Company had responded to. The Complainant then stated he received no response from the Company and it must have gone into his junk or spam folder. On September 19, 2017, the Complainant contacted the Company and stated that he filed an informal complaint with the Commission's Bureau of Consumer Services ("BCS") at Case No. 3543364; however, the Company was not served with a complaint and therefore advised that the Complainant should contact the Commission. On September 29, 2017, a pre-disconnection warning letter was sent to the Complainants pursuant to 66 Pa.C.S. § 1406, 52 Pa. Code § 56.81 and Rules 9 and 20 of the Company's Commission-approved Tariff.³ On October 3, 2017, the Complainant contacted the Company stating that he had filed a formal complaint with the Commission. The Company representative verified that the Company had not yet been served with a formal complaint, but once received, the Company would comply with Commission directives. On October 6, 2017, the

³ *West Penn Power Company Retail Electric Service Tariff*, Electric Pa. PUC No. 40, pp. 46, 61, issued May 1, 2015, effective May 3, 2015.

Commission electronically served the Company with the instant Formal Complaint and termination efforts ceased.

8. On or about September 27, 2017, the Complainant filed a Formal Complaint with the Commission against West Penn at the above-captioned docket. The Company was electronically served with the Formal Complaint on October 6, 2017.

9. West Penn is timely filing its Answer and New Matter contemporaneously with this Preliminary Objection, which Answer and New Matter is incorporated into this Preliminary Objection as if fully set forth herein.

III. Argument

10. The Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure permit parties to file preliminary objections. The grounds for preliminary objections are limited to those set forth in 52 Pa. Code § 5.101(a) as follows:

- (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.
- (3) Insufficient specificity of a pleading.
- (4) Legal insufficiency of a pleading.
- (5) Lack of capacity to sue, nonjoinder of a necessary party or misjoinder of a cause of action.
- (6) Pendency of a prior proceeding or agreement for alternative dispute resolution.
- (7) Standing of a party to participate in the proceeding.

11 The Commission's procedure regarding the disposition of preliminary objections is similar to that utilized in Pennsylvania civil practice. *Equitable Small Transportation Intervenors v. Equitable Gas Company*, Docket No. C-00935435 (Opinion and Order entered July 18, 1994).

12. A preliminary objection in civil practice seeking dismissal of a pleading will be granted only where relief is clearly warranted and free from doubt. *Interstate Traveler Services,*

Inc. v. Pa. Dept. of Environmental Resources, 406 A.2d 1020 (Pa. 1979); *Rivera v. Philadelphia Theological Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo, Inc.*, 595 A.2d 172 (Pa. Super. 1991). The Commission has adopted this standard. *Montague v. Philadelphia Electric Company*, 66 Pa. PUC 24 (1988).

13. In accordance with Section 701 of the Code, 66 Pa.C.S. § 701, a person may file a complaint which sets forth “any act or thing done or omitted to be done by any public utility in violation, or claimed violation, of any law which the commission has jurisdiction to administer, or of any regulation or order of the commission.” As explained below, the Company has not violated the Public Utility Code or the orders or regulations of the Commission.⁴ In fact, the Company’s action have been in compliance with Act 129 and the June 5 Order.

14. The moving party may not rely on its own factual assertions, but must accept for the purposes of disposition of the preliminary objection, all well-pleaded, material facts of the other party, as well as every inference fairly deducible from those facts. *County of Allegheny v. Commw. of Pa.*, 490 A.2d 402 (Pa. 1985). Therefore, in ruling on a preliminary objection, the Commission must assume, for decisional purposes only, that the factual allegations of the Formal Complaint are true. *Id.*

15. West Penn’s smart meter deployment plan was approved by the Commission at Docket No. M-2013-2341991 by Order entered June 5, 2014. In accordance with the June 5 Order, the Company filed its final Smart Meter Deployment Plan (“SMP”) on June 16, 2014. The SMP was approved by the Commission on June 20, 2014. The Complainant challenges no aspect of the Company’s provision of electric service other than the installation of a smart meter at the Service Location, as required by Act 129 and the Company’s SMP.

⁴ 66 Pa.C.S. § 701.

16. Commission precedent is uniform that it cannot grant exceptions to the statutory directive that smart meters be installed by allowing customers to opt out or from paying a smart meter charge.⁵

17. Assuming the facts pleaded in the Formal Complaint are true, as the Commission must for the purposes of ruling on a preliminary objection, the Complainant has failed to allege that West Penn has committed or omitted an act in violation of a Commission statute, regulation, order, or West Penn's tariff, a finding of which must be made in order to sustain a formal complaint. *See* 66 Pa.C.S. § 701; *County of Allegheny*, supra. (Compl. ¶ 4).

18. Because Act 129 and the Commission's orders not only authorize but require the Company to develop and implement a smart meter procurement and installation plan, and do not allow a customer to opt out of having a smart meter installed or opt out of paying the smart meter charge, this Complaint must be dismissed. As a matter of law, the Company is required to install a smart meter at the Service Location. As such, the Commission cannot find the Company to be in violation for having attempted to follow the law as it has done here.

19. Therefore, the Formal Complaint is legally insufficient because it fails to state a claim upon which the Commission can grant relief. *See* 52 Pa. Code § 5.101(a)(4).

20. The Commission may dismiss a complaint without hearing if a hearing is not necessary in the public interest. 66 Pa.C.S. § 703(b); 52 Pa. Code § 5.21 (d).

⁵ *Negley v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2010-2205305 (Initial Decision dated January 3, 2011 became final without Commission action closed March 3, 2011); *Lutherschmidt v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2010-2200353 (Final Order entered March 25, 2011). The Commission has continued to uphold installation of smart meters and imposition of smart meter charges on customers' bills by dismissing complaints opposing installation of smart meters and imposition of smart meter charges on the basis of legal insufficiency. *Corbett v. Pennsylvania Power Company*, Docket No. C-2011-2219898 (Final Order entered May 27, 2011); *Jones v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2011-2224380 (Final Order entered June 28, 2011); *Griffin v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2012-2300172 (Final Order entered October 26, 2012); *Brake v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2013-2367308 (Final Order entered November 14, 2013); *Drake v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2014-2413771 (Final Order entered June 12, 2014); *Efaw v West Penn Company*, Docket No. C-2014-2413744 (Final Order entered June 12, 2014). *See also*, the Initial Decision of ALJ Susan D. Colwell in *Dennis McElwain v. Pennsylvania Power Company*, Docket No. C-2014-2451478 issued December 3, 2015.

21. Recently, the Commission set for hearing two cases in which the complainant was opposed to the installation of a smart meter at their premises.⁶ These cases represent a departure from past Commission practice of dismissing such complaints on Preliminary Objections. The Commission stated that where a complainant has presented specific factual averments regarding the health or other effects that they have experienced after a smart meter was installed at their home, the Commission has overruled Preliminary Objections and allowed a case to proceed. Specifically, in *Kreider*, the complainant alleged specific deleterious health effects after installation of a smart meter affecting her specific medical condition. Further, in *Van Schoyck*, the complainants alleged potential health risks due to constant ringing noise in their home and their inability to sleep since the time the smart meter was installed.⁷ In contrast, in the instant case, the Complainant have made no specific factual averments regarding health or other effects experienced which began *after* a smart meter was installed. In fact, the Complainant only alleges, speculatively, that the smart meter could affect the health of his wife, and as relief he wants the Commission to bar the Company from installing a smart meter until the fourth quarter of 2022. The Commission has not recognized a general assertion of general, potential health concerns as sufficient to overcome Preliminary Objections.⁸ Therefore, the Company respectfully submits that the matters plead in the subject Formal Complaint do not meet the standards set in the *Kreider* and *Van Schoyck* cases such that this matter can survive dismissal on preliminary objections.

22. Further, the Commission has upheld decisions granting preliminary objections and dismissing complaints for legal insufficiency opposing smart meter installation and the smart

⁶ *Susan Kreider v. PECO Energy Company*, Docket No. C-2015-2469655 (Order on Reconsideration entered January 28, 2016); *Stephen and Diane Van Schoyck v. PECO Energy Company*, Docket No. C-2015-2478239 (Opinion and Order entered February 25, 2016).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Richard and Marie Fugo in care of Fugo Eye Institute v. PECO Energy Company*, Docket Nos. C-2015-2519763 and C-2015-2519770 (Order entered April 6, 2016).

meter charge. In *Richard Negley v. Metropolitan Edison Company*, Docket No. C-2010-2205305 (Initial Decision issued January 3, 2011), ALJ Susan D. Colwell dismissed a complaint opposing installation of smart meters for legal insufficiency. ALJ Colwell concluded that Act 129 of 2008 authorized the installation of smart meters by EDCs. ALJ Colwell held that the Commission's orders approving the EDC's smart meter plans did not exempt any customers from the smart meter plans or from paying the charges associated with the smart meter plans. By Commission final order entered March 3, 2011, ALJ Colwell's Initial Decision became final without further Commission action. The Commission has continued to uphold smart meter charges on customers' bills and dismiss complaints opposing the smart meter charges for legal insufficiency. *Dennis Lutherschmidt v. Metropolitan Edison Company*, Docket No. C-2010-2200353 (Order Issued March 25, 2011); *Gloria Corbett v Pennsylvania Power Company*, Docket No. C-2011-2219898 (Order entered May 27, 2011); *Edward Jones v. Metropolitan Edison Company*, Docket No. C-2011-2224380 (Order entered June 28, 2011); *Gerald Griffin v Metropolitan Edison Company*, Docket No. C-2012-2300172 (Order entered July 31, 2012); *Michael Balogh v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. C-2012-2329713 (Order entered January 4, 2013).

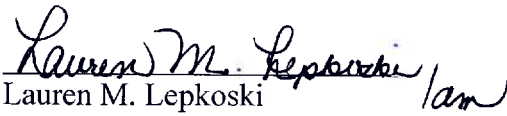
23. Because Act 129 of 2008 and the Commission's orders authorize the Company to develop and implement a smart meter procurement and installation plan, and impose a smart meter charge on its customers to pay for that development, implementation, procurement and installation, the Complainant has not set forth in his complaint any act done by the Company that violates a Commission regulation, statute or order. The Company is authorized to impose a charge on its customers to develop and implement a smart meter procurement and installation plan that will lead to the installation of smart meters throughout its service territory.

IV. Conclusion

WHEREFORE, for the foregoing reasons, West Penn Power Company respectfully requests that the Commission: (1) grant its Preliminary Objections and strike the Complainant's request for an exemption from the installation of a smart meter or payment of the smart meter charge; (2) dismiss the Formal Complaint in its entirety with prejudice; and (3) grant the Company such other relief as may be just and reasonable under the circumstances.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 26, 2017


Lauren M. Lepkoski
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Counsel for West Penn Power Company

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CHRISTOPHER L. MACEY

v.

WEST PENN POWER COMPANY

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Docket No. C-2017-2628021

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a true copy of the Preliminary Objections of West Penn Power Company to the Formal Complaint of Christopher L. Macey upon the individuals listed below, in accordance with the requirements of 52 Pa. Code § 1.54 (relating to service by a participant).

Service by First Class Mail, postage prepaid, as follows:

Christopher L. Macey
201 Highland Avenue S
Oakdale, PA 15071

Dated: October 26, 2017


Lauren M. Lepkoski

Tori L. Giesler

FirstEnergy Service Company

2800 Pottsville Pike

P.O. Box 16001

Reading, Pennsylvania 19612-6001

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