

**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Cindy Johnson	:	
	:	
v.	:	C-2017-2626234
	:	
Philadelphia Gas Works	:	

**INITIAL DECISION**

Before  
F. Joseph Brady  
Administrative Law Judge

**INTRODUCTION**

This Initial Decision dismisses the Complaint of Cindy Johnson against Philadelphia Gas Works because she failed to appear for her hearing and prosecute her Complaint.

**HISTORY OF THE PROCEEDING**

On September 25, 2017, Cindy Johnson (Complainant) filed a formal Complaint (Complaint) against Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW or Respondent) with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission). In the Complaint, the Complainant placed checkmarks in boxes indicating “[t]he utility is threatening to shut off my service or has already shut off my service” and “I would like a payment agreement.”

On October 16, 2017, PGW filed an Answer admitting that it terminated the service at 5521 N. Palethorp Street, 1, Philadelphia, PA (Service Address) and the Complainant seeks a payment arrangement. The Respondent further answered that as of September 22, 2017, the

Complainant's income was \$2,041 per month for a household of two people, which makes her ineligible to participate in PGW's Customer Responsibility Program (CRP).

By Hearing Notice dated November 13, 2017, a hearing was scheduled for January 10, 2018, at 9:30 a.m., and the matter was assigned to me. I issued a Prehearing Order on November 21, 2017. Both the Hearing Notice and the Prehearing Order advised the parties of the location, date and time of the scheduled hearing, and warned in bold and underlined type: "**If you are not present and prepared to go forward with your case when it is called, your case will be dismissed by the Administrative Law Judge.**"

The Call of the Docket<sup>1</sup> began on January 10, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. as scheduled. This matter was called to proceed at 9:37 a.m. Counsel for PGW was present with a witness and was prepared to proceed. The Complainant was not present.

No witnesses were presented and no exhibits were introduced into the record. Respondent's Counsel moved that the Complaint be dismissed with prejudice for lack of prosecution pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 5.245. In accordance with Commission policy, I am granting the Motion.

The record closed on February 2, 2018, upon my receipt of the transcript.

#### FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Complainant in this case is Cindy Johnson.
2. The Respondent in this case is Philadelphia Gas Works.
3. On September 25, 2017, the Complainant filed a Complaint with the Commission against the Respondent.

---

<sup>1</sup> In a Call of the Docket, multiple cases are scheduled at the same time and called to be heard serially.

4. The Respondent filed an Answer on October 16, 2017.
5. By notice dated November 13, 2017, the Commission scheduled this matter for an initial hearing on January 10, 2018 at 9:30 a.m.
6. The Commission sent the notice of the hearing to the Complainant by regular first-class mail to the address stated on the Complaint.
7. On November 21, 2017, a Prehearing Order was sent to the Complainant by regular first-class mail to the address stated on the Complaint.
8. Neither the Hearing Notice nor the Prehearing Order were returned as undeliverable.
9. The Complainant failed to appear at the January 10, 2018 hearing.
10. The Complainant did not settle or withdraw her Complaint.

### DISCUSSION

Administrative agencies, such as the Commission, are required to provide due process to the parties appearing before them. *Schneider v. Pa. Pub. Util. Comm'n.*, 479 A.2d 10 (Pa.Cmwlth. 1984). This due process requirement is satisfied, however, when the administrative agency provides the parties notice and the opportunity to be heard.

On November 13, 2017, the Commission sent notice of the hearing in this case to the Complainant by regular first-class mail to the address stated on the Complaint. This piece of mail was never returned to the sender, the scheduling staff for the Office of Administrative Law Judge (OALJ) in Harrisburg.

In addition, I issued a prehearing order dated November 21, 2017, which, *inter alia*, warned both parties of potentially serious consequences if they failed to obtain a continuance and failed to attend the hearing. The prehearing order, which was mailed to the

Complainant at the address shown on the Complaint, was never returned. Accordingly, I must presume that this mail, which was sent in the ordinary course of business, was received by the Complainant. *Berkowitz v. Mayflower Securities, Inc.*, 317 A.2d 584 (Pa. 1974); *Meierdierck v. Miller*, 147 A.2d 406 (Pa. 1959); *Samaras v. Hartwick*, 698 A.2d 71 (Pa.Super. 1997); *Judge v. Celina Mutual Insurance Co.*, 444 A.2d 658 (Pa.Super. 1982).

The Complainant did not appear for the hearing and has not contacted the Commission. Under these circumstances, the Complainant has had ample opportunity to appear and be heard in this proceeding. Therefore, the due process rights of the Complainant have been fully protected. *Sentner v. Bell Telephone Co. of Pa.*, Docket No. F-00161106 (Opinion and Order entered October 25, 1993); 52 Pa.Code § 5.245(a).

Finally, Section 332(a) of the Public Utility Code, 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a), places the burden of proof upon the proponent of any request for relief. As the party bringing this Complaint, the Complainant bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to relief. By failing to appear and proffer any evidence to support her Complaint, the Complainant has failed to meet this burden. Therefore, the Complaint should be dismissed with prejudice. *Jefferson v. UGI Utilities, Inc.*, Docket No. Z-00269892 (Opinion and Order entered December 26, 1995); *El-Ayazra v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. F-2015-2509292 (Opinion and Order entered June 30, 2016); 52 Pa.Code § 5.245.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over the subject matter of and the parties to this proceeding. 66 Pa.C.S. § 701.

2. The due process rights of the Complainant have been fully protected in this proceeding. *Sentner v. Bell Telephone Co. of Pa.*, Docket No. F-00161106 (Opinion and Order entered October 25, 1993); 52 Pa.Code § 5.245(a).

3. By failing to appear for the hearing and proffer any evidence to support the Complaint, the Complainant has failed to meet her burden of proving that she is entitled to the relief that she seeks from the Commission. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a).

ORDER

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the motion of Philadelphia Gas Works to dismiss the Complaint filed by Cindy Johnson at Docket No. C-2017-2626234 is granted;
2. That the Complaint of Cindy Johnson against Philadelphia Gas Works at Docket No. C-2017-2626234 is dismissed with prejudice; and
3. That the record at Docket No. C-2017-2626234 be marked closed.

Date: February 21, 2018

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
F. Joseph Brady  
Administrative Law Judge