

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

CHRIS PALUTI VS
WEST PENN POWER COMPANY

Public Meeting October 29, 2020
3004845-OSA
Docket No. C-2018-3004845

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN GLADYS BROWN DUTRIEUILLE

Mr. Paluti filed a Complaint against West Penn alleging that between May 17, 2017 and August 16, 2018, his home experienced 19 instances of electric outages, flickers, and service interruptions. Additionally, during the month and a half period between the June 3, 2019 and July 19, 2019 evidentiary hearings on this matter, Mr. Paluti documented ten more service disruptions, for a total of 29.

Because our evaluation of a Section 1501 violation regarding unreasonable service is fact specific as to the number of outages, their causes, and a Company's corrective actions, I agree with the dismissal of this Complaint. I stress that dismissal of the Complaint by no means diminishes the inconvenience experienced by Mr. Paluti.

Between May 2018 and November 13, 2018, there was one line failure, one forced outage, one planned outage, and four outages caused by off right-of-way trees. For the majority of the remaining dates on which the Complainant reported service interruptions, the Company testified that these interruptions were caused by recloser operations.

The record shows that West Penn responded to the outages by investigating in a timely manner and making repairs to its facilities in a timely manner for each interruption of which it had notice. It is significant that as part of resolving this issue, West Penn removed twelve Emerald Ash trees along a nine-mile segment of land not owned by the utility.

When a recloser operates correctly, it interrupts power to a portion of the circuit for brief periods, usually only one or two outages of a few seconds, until it determines if the fault condition persists and then opens that portion of the circuit with the fault, causing a sustained outage for customers on that portion. If the fault conditions do not persist, such as a falling branch that has only brushed the conductor, then the customer only experiences the momentary outage(s). These recloser operations may greatly reduce the number of customer sustained outages and also segregate the sustained outage to a portion of a circuit, rather than interrupting service to all customers on the circuit. However, continual recloser operations over time are not ideal and may be an indication of vegetation or other issues for the utility to

investigate and I encourage our electric utilities to be responsive to customers that communicate they are experiencing continual momentary outages.

I encourage Mr. Paluti to contact West Penn if service reliability declines in the future. I also ask that staff from the Reliability and Emergency Preparedness Division of our Bureau of Technical Utility Services consider discussing this particular circuit's condition and performance with West Penn Power.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gladys Brown Dutrieuille". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the text.

October 29, 2020

Date

Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, Chairman