

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**  
**Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120**

**Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement**  
**vs.**  
**Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.**

**Public Meeting – December 8, 2022**  
**3012079-OSA**  
**Docket No. M-2022-3012079**

**MOTION OF CHAIRMAN GLADYS BROWN DUTRIEUILLE**

This matter concerns a natural gas explosion that occurred on July 31, 2019, at a residence in Washington County. The explosion injured four people, demolished a residential structure, and caused severe damage to three vehicles. One other residence was condemned, and numerous other homes were damaged. The explosion occurred while Columbia Gas of PA, Inc. was working on an incremental mainline uprating project as part of the Company's "Dewey Avenue Replacement Project" (Project). The Project was a two-phase project initiated by Columbia Gas on March 8, 2019, to install new main and uprate existing main from its operating pressure of Low Pressure (LP), ~ 11 inches of water column, to a Maximum Allowable Operating Pressure (MAOP) of 45 pounds per square inch gauge (psig).

The Commission's independent Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement (I&E) initiated an informal investigation. A joint evaluation conducted by the State Fire Marshal and I&E's Pipeline Safety personnel on Aug 23, 2019, determined that the primary cause of the explosion was the over-pressurization of the house piping and appliances since the service line to the residence was not equipped with a service regulator at the time of the incremental pressure uprating.

On March 4, 2022, I&E and Columbia Gas of PA submitted a Joint Petition for Approval of Settlement (Settlement). The Commission issued the Tentative Order requesting comments regarding the proposed Settlement on June 16, 2022. The proposed Settlement provides that Columbia agrees to pay a total civil penalty of \$990,000 not recoverable in rates. Additionally, Columbia agrees to an extensive list of modifications of operational practices with regard to how the utility uprates system pressure and maps its service territory. Comments were filed by: (1) North Franklin Township (Township); (2) Richard C. Culbertson; and (3) the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA).

Upon review of the Settlement and Statements in Support of same, the limited record, and the Comments filed in response to the Tentative Order, I believe that further development of the record is necessary before the Commission renders a decision on appropriate remedies in relation to this event.

As noted by the OCA, the Settlement contains no timeline for corrective action by Columbia. I agree that a timeline for action should be established. The OCA also requests an accounting of the damage caused by the explosion. I believe that this factual information is pertinent and

necessary to determine the scope of the harm caused by this event. Severity of harm is a factor in determining whether to assess a civil penalty. 52 Pa. Code § 69.1201(c)(2).

Mr. Culbertson's Comments urged the Commission to take into consideration the September 13, 2018 explosions resulting from over-pressurization (2018 MA Event) caused by Columbia Gas of Massachusetts (Columbia Gas MA) which resulted in a death, injury, and extensive property damage. Columbia Gas MA is not within this Commission's jurisdiction. However, to the extent that operational policy set by these previously affiliated companies' parent company are relevant to the operational process utilized by Columbia Gas of PA, the 2018 MA Event and the remedial actions established and adopted by Columbia Gas of PA as a result of the 2018 MA Event may be relevant to this case.

I am unable to make an informed determination on this matter without information regarding the following:

- Whether any remedial measures stemming from the 2018 MA Event were recommended for Columbia Gas of PA and, if so, whether they were effectuated.
- An estimated timeline for completion of each of the corrective actions proposed in this Settlement.
- An accounting of the monetary damage caused by the explosion and if Columbia Gas ratepayers are responsible for the financial liability

I will vote to deny the Settlement in its current form. I note that after the explosion at 100 Park Lane, Columbia Gas made several changes to its policies and procedures. These modifications to the Company's procedures, which also includes additional trainings, are intended to prevent a similar incident and benefit public safety. (I&E Statement in Support at 10-12; Columbia Gas Statement in Support at 8-9.) While I understand that moving to deny this Settlement would delay closing this docket, I do so with the understanding that remedial measures pertaining to safety are already underway. If the settling Parties choose to provide the requested information and proceed with a settlement of this informal investigation, I ask that they do so expeditiously.

**THEREFORE, I MOVE THAT:**

1. The Joint Petition for Approval of Settlement filed on March 4, 2022, between the Commission's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement and Columbia Gas of PA, Inc. is denied.
2. That this matter is referred to the Commission's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement for such further proceedings as deemed necessary and appropriate.
3. That any re-submission of a settlement of this matter should be done within sixty (60) days of the entry of an opinion and order at this docket.

4. The Office of Special Assistants shall prepare an opinion and order consistent with this Motion.
5. A copy of the Opinion and Order shall be served on the Office of Consumer Advocate, the Office of Small Business Advocate, and Mr. Richard C. Culbertson.

**December 8, 2022**  
**Date**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gladys Brown Dutrieuille". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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**Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, Chairman**