



**PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS**

800 West Montgomery Avenue • Philadelphia, PA 19122

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May 30, 2023

**VIA ELECTRONIC FILING**

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

Re: Joanna Pierce v. Philadelphia Gas Works; Docket No. C-2023-3040631

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Enclosed for electronic filing please find Philadelphia Gas Works' Preliminary Objection to Formal Complaint with regard to the above-referenced matter. Copies to be served in accordance with the attached Certificate of Service.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Graciela Christlieb*

Graciela Christlieb, Esquire

Enclosure

cc: Cert. of Service w/enc.

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a true copy of Philadelphia Gas Works' Preliminary Objection upon the persons listed below in the manner indicated in accordance with the requirements of 52 Pa. Code §1.54 (relating to service by a party).

**Via Email Only**  
Joanna Pierce  
943 Rundale Avenue  
Yeadon, PA 19050

Date: May 30, 2023

*/s/ Graciela Christlieb*  
Graciela Christlieb, Esquire

**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Joanna Pierce,	:	
Complainant,	:	
v.	:	Docket No. C-2023-3040631
	:	
Philadelphia Gas Works,	:	
Respondent.	:	

**NOTICE TO PLEAD**

**To:** Joanna Pierce  
943 Rundale Avenue  
Yeadon, PA 19050

Pursuant to Pa. Code § 5.101, you are hereby notified that any answer to the enclosed Preliminary Objection of Philadelphia Gas Works must be filed within ten (10) days of the date of service of the Preliminary Objection.

All pleadings, such as an Answer to Preliminary Objection, must be filed with the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission with a copy served to counsel for PGW and, when applicable, the Administrative Law Judge presiding over the proceeding.

*/s/ Graciela Christlieb*

Graciela Christlieb, Esquire  
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Philadelphia, PA 19122  
[graciela.christlieb@pgworks.com](mailto:graciela.christlieb@pgworks.com)

Date: May 30, 2023

*Counsel for PGW*

**BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Joanna Pierce,	:	
Complainant,	:	
v.	:	Docket No. C-2023-3040631
	:	
Philadelphia Gas Works,	:	
Respondent.	:	

**PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS’  
PRELIMINARY OBJECTIONS TO THE FORMAL COMPLAINT**

Philadelphia Gas Works (“PGW” or “Respondent”) submits the following Preliminary Objections to the Formal Complaint of Joanna Pierce (“Complainant”) served by the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (“Commission” or “PUC”) on May 11, 2023 (“Complaint”). Pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 5.61 and 5.101(d) of the Commission’s regulations, PGW also filed an Answer with New Matter to the Complaint on this same date. In support of these Preliminary Objections, PGW avers as follows:

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Complainant claims she is owed a “boiler heater replacement cost”. Complainant further claims that the amount is \$5,000. *See* Complaint, ¶6.

**II. LEGAL STANDARDS FOR PRELIMINARY OBJECTIONS**

1. Preliminary objections to a Complaint are a permissible filing under the Commission’s Rules of Administrative Practice and Procedure.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Commission’s procedure regarding the disposition of preliminary objections is similar to that utilized in Pennsylvania civil practice.<sup>2</sup>
3. Under Section 5.101(a) of the Commission’s regulations, preliminary objections must specifically state the legal and factual grounds relied upon and be limited to the following:

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<sup>1</sup> 52 Pa. Code § 5.101(a)(1)-(7). *Equitable Small Transportation Intervenors v. Equitable Gas Company*, 1994 Pa. P.U.C. LEXIS 69, Docket No. C-00935435 (July 18, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*; *Montague v. Philadelphia Electric Company*, 66 Pa. P.U.C. 24 (1988).

- (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; and
- (7) Standing of a party to participate in the proceeding.

52 Pa. Code § 5.101(a)(1-7).

4. The moving party may not rely on its own factual assertions but must accept for the purposes of disposition of the preliminary objections, all well-pleaded, material facts of the other party, as well as every inference fairly deducible from those facts.<sup>3</sup> However, the Commission need not accept as true conclusions of law, unwarranted inferences from facts, argumentative allegations or expressions of opinion.<sup>4</sup>

5. In deciding the preliminary objections, the Commission must determine whether, based on the well-pleaded factual averments of the party, recovery or relief is possible.<sup>5</sup>

### **III. PRELIMINARY OBJECTIONS BY PGW**

6. PGW incorporates herein, as if the same were set forth at length here, its responses to paragraphs 1 to 7 of the Complaint, as pled in its Answer with New Matter. In addition, PGW also incorporates herein all allegations pled in its New Matter to the Complaint as well as the exhibits attached thereto (if any), as if the same were set forth at length here.

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<sup>3</sup> *County of Allegheny v. Cmwth. of Pa.*, 490 A.2d 402 (Pa. 1985).

<sup>4</sup> *Stanton-Negley Drug Co. v. Dep't of Pub. Welfare*, 927 A.2d 671, 673 (Pa. Cmwth. 2007).

<sup>5</sup> *Department of Auditor General, et al. v. SERS, et al.*, 836 A.2d 1053, 1064 (Pa. Cmwth. 2003); *P.J.S. v. Pa. State Ethics Commission*, 669 A.2d 1105 (Pa. Cmwth. 1996).

## A. Dismissal Based on Lack of Commission Jurisdiction

7. Section 5.101(a)(1) of the Commission's regulations permits a party to file a preliminary objection based on the lack of Commission jurisdiction. 52 Pa. Code § 5.101(a)(1).

8. To act on the Complaint, the Commission must have jurisdiction over the subject matter.<sup>6</sup> The Commission, as a creation of the General Assembly, has only the powers and authority granted to it by the General Assembly contained in the Public Utility Code.<sup>7</sup> As such, the Commission must act within, and cannot exceed, its jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup> A party to the proceeding may not create jurisdiction where jurisdiction does not exist.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. The Commission Lacks Jurisdiction Over Requested Relief in Form of Money Damages.

9. As part of the relief sought, Complainant is asking the Commission to award money damages. *See* Complaint, ¶ 6.

10. The Commission's enforcement powers do not include the ability to award complainants with money damages.<sup>10</sup>

11. Even if it is determined that Complainant has asserted a legally sufficient billing dispute claim which falls within the Commission's jurisdiction (which PGW disputes), the Commission still lacks jurisdiction to award Complainant with money damages.

12. For this reason, PGW respectfully requests that the Commission sustain this Preliminary Objection and strike the requested relief from the Complaint as impertinent matter.

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<sup>6</sup> *Hughes v. Pennsylvania State Police*, 619 A.2d 390 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1992), *alloc. den.*, 637 A.2d 293 (Pa. 1993) ("The Commission must have subject matter jurisdiction as a prerequisite to the exercise of its power before it can decide a controversy.")

<sup>7</sup> *Feingold v. Bell Tel. Co. of Pa.*, 383 A.2d 791 (Pa. 1977).

<sup>8</sup> *City of Pittsburgh v. Pa. PUC*, 43 A.2d 348 (Pa. Super. 1945).

<sup>9</sup> *Roberts v. Martorano*, 235 A.2d 602 (Pa. 1967).

<sup>10</sup> *Elkin v. Bell Tel. Co. of Pa.*, 420 A.2d 371 (Pa. 1980); *Feingold*, 383 A.2d at 794-795.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

WHEREFORE, PGW respectfully requests that this Commission grant PGW's Preliminary Objections, Strike the requested relief as impertinent matter, dismiss the Complaint, and enter any other relief to PGW that is deemed to be reasonable and appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Graciela Christlieb*

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Date: May 30, 2023

*Counsel for PGW*