

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

Public Meeting held December 21, 2023

Commissioners Present:

Stephen M. DeFrank, Chairman
Kimberly Barrow, Vice Chair
Ralph V. Yanora
Kathryn L. Zerfuss
John F. Coleman, Jr.

Docket Number:
A-2023-3043896

Application for Approval of Abandonment of
Service by Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. to
Two Inactive Residential and Two Inactive
Commercial Premises in Dunbar, Fayette County,
Pennsylvania

ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

On October 26, 2023, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (Columbia Gas), Utility Code 120700, filed the above-captioned Application with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) seeking a Certificate of Public Convenience authorizing it to abandon natural gas distribution service to two inactive residential and two inactive commercial Premises (Premises) in Dunbar, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. The Application was filed pursuant to Section 1102(a)(2) of the Public Utility Code, 66 Pa. C.S. §1102(a)(2). For the reasons expressed herein, the Commission approves Columbia Gas's Application to abandon natural gas service to the Premises.

Columbia Gas is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Columbia Gas is currently engaged in the business of selling and distributing natural gas to retail customers within the Commonwealth. Columbia Gas provides retail natural gas service to approximately 445,000 customers in 26 counties of Pennsylvania, pursuant to certificates of public convenience granted by the Commission. Application, Corrected ¶1.

Columbia Gas states that the premises previously received natural gas service from a low-pressure 250-foot-long distribution line that Columbia Gas owns and operates, which is referred to as the Dunbar LP System. Columbia Gas states that all the Premises have been inactive for at least five years. Columbia Gas states that the distribution line it is seeking to abandon is comprised of steel and plastic pipe and is approximately 59 and 39 years old, respectively. Columbia Gas states that these facilities are at the end of their useful lives and need to be replaced. Columbia Gas states that only the referenced inactive Premises will be affected by the proposed abandonment. Columbia Gas further states, that there is no potential for new customer growth along the distribution line that Columbia Gas is proposing to abandon, and the Premises' owners have not requested service, as each premises has been inactive for more than five years. Application ¶¶5 and 7.

Columbia Gas estimates that replacing the subject facilities would result in a net increase in capital investment of at least \$115,000. Columbia Gas states that based on the nonexistent usage, and the fact that there hasn't been a request for service from the Premises since they were disconnected more than five years ago, there is no expected revenue from the installation of facilities to serve the Premises. Columbia Gas states that the cost of installing such facilities is not justified. Columbia Gas states that the replacement of this section of distribution main is not otherwise operationally needed for Columbia Gas to transport or deliver gas to other locations in its service territory. Columbia Gas states that it is neither in the public interest, nor in the interest of Columbia Gas's other customers, to replace the facilities that formerly served the Premises. Application ¶8.

Columbia Gas states that prior to filing its application it sent certified letters, dated October 4, 2023, to the current owners of the Premises. Columbia Gas states that the letters informed the owners of the Premises that the facilities which previously served the Premises are no longer needed for the operation of Columbia Gas's distribution system, and therefore, Columbia Gas is planning to take the facilities out of service. Columbia Gas states that the letter also advised that Columbia Gas intended to file an abandonment application with this Commission, and that gas distribution service from Columbia Gas would no longer be available to the Premises if the Commission were to grant the application. Columbia Gas states that the letter advised the property owners to contact Columbia Gas if they had any questions or concerns. Application ¶9.

Columbia Gas states that it was contacted by the owner of one of the inactive residential and one of the inactive commercial premises regarding the abandonment. Columbia Gas states that this owner conveyed his disappointment with Columbia Gas's proposed abandonment. Columbia Gas states that gas service was disconnected to these premises in 2004 and 2006, respectively. Columbia Gas states that this owner did not provide information regarding any expected reconnection of these premises. Columbia Gas states that the owner of the second inactive commercial premises contacted Columbia Gas and informed Columbia Gas that the premises is being renovated and they are planning to convert to electric. Columbia Gas states that as of the filing date of this application, the owner of the second inactive residential premises has not contacted Columbia Gas regarding the abandonment of gas service. Application ¶¶10-12.

Accordingly, Columbia Gas requests that the Commission issue a Certificate of Public Convenience pursuant to 66 Pa. C.S. § 1102(a)(2) to permit Columbia Gas to abandon natural gas distribution service to the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises located in Dunbar, Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

Columbia Gas concludes that approval of its application is necessary and proper for

the following reasons:

- 1) The distribution line that previously served the Premises must be abandoned due to having reached the end of its useful life.
- 2) Columbia Gas disconnected natural gas service to the Premises more than five years ago and there has not been a request for reconnection of service for the Premises since their disconnection dates.
- 3) The incremental cost to replace the distribution line serving the Premises cannot be justified since there would be no revenues and is not operationally needed.

Notice of the filing of this Application was published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on Saturday November 11, 2023. Columbia Gas published notice of this application in the area newspaper¹ on November 6, 2023, and the notarized proof of publication was furnished to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission on November 6, 2023. No protests were filed, and no hearings were held.

Upon full consideration of the facts presented in this case, we concur with Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.'s reasons for abandonment of the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises located in Dunbar, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, and agree that it is neither reasonable nor prudent to replace the distribution line which is serving the Premises. Therefore, we approve Columbia Gas's Application to abandon natural gas service to the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises. **THEREFORE,**

¹ The Herald-Standard.

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the Application for Approval of Abandonment of Service by Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. to the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises located in Dunbar, Fayette County, Pennsylvania is hereby approved.

2. That a Certificate of Public Convenience be issued pursuant to 66 Pa. C.S. § 1102(a)(2) authorizing Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. to abandon natural gas distribution service to the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises located in Dunbar, Fayette County, Pennsylvania as discussed in the body of this Order.

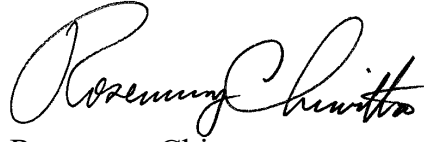
3. That within ten days following the abandonment of natural gas distribution service to the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. shall file a verified Notice of Abandonment with this Commission at Docket No. A-2023-3043896, containing the following information:

- (a) The completion date for the abandonment of gas service to the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises;
- (b) A statement explaining how compliance with 49 C.F.R. § 192.727 relating to abandonment or deactivation of facilities was completed; and
- (c) A copy of the verified Notice of Abandonment shall also be served upon the Gas Safety Division of this Commission's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement.

4. That a copy of this Order shall be served upon Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc., the Commission's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement – Gas Safety Division, the Office of Small Business Advocate, the Office of Consumer Advocate, and the owners of the two inactive residential and two inactive commercial premises located in Dunbar, Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

5. That upon filing of the notice mentioned in Ordering Paragraph 3, above, this case be marked closed.

BY THE COMMISSION,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosemary Chiavetta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being particularly prominent.

Rosemary Chiavetta

Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: December 21, 2023

ORDER ENTERED: December 21, 2023