

Dear Commissioners,

A lot of time has passed and much has transpired in the time that it took for this matter to come before you. Before today, I have never had any dealings with the commission whatsoever. I am a law-abiding citizen and have never been a party to a criminal or civil proceeding either. I do not possess a law school education. While I have a basic understanding of the legal system, I am certainly not versed in the legal jargon and Latin phrasing that lawyers like to bandy about on the regular. Not for lack of effort, but I could not come across any legal aid network that hands such matters or would be willing to take the case.

I have only participated in one administrative law hearing in my life. The judge that presided over that matter took charge of the hearing's direction. The judge asked questions of both sides and was looking to gain a complete understanding of the issues and facts of the case for herself. The hearing that was run this past April was a horse of a different color. I am not a screenwriter and this process seemed to call for prepared monologues and staging for a live production. Frankly, it was more about the theatrics than anything else.

I did not know what I was getting myself into since nothing was provided to me by the commission beforehand as to what the proceedings would entail. I had no law books to consult, most especially when it came to the policies and procedures of the commission. This matter transitioned to the formal level based upon what I was told in December, namely that the Bureau of Consumer Services investigator assigned to the informal complaint could not reopen or revisit his work, even in light of the errors pointed out to him upon receiving his decision.

I read the documents that the utility company's counsel filed in advance of the hearing. From what was written, it seemed as though this hearing was going to be an initial one centered on whether or not the informal complaint had merit to proceed to the formal complaint level. Was counsel not asking for the case to be dismissed and with prejudice? Instead of that, the hearing was more about fitting things into case law and theatrics than it was about focusing solely on a rather straightforward issue of a billing dispute.

Let me be clear here before anyone should try and accuse me of a "woe is me" approach. I raise these circumstances so that the commission can understand my take on this whole process and can hopefully improve things for all complainants moving forward. If legal representation is really what is necessary for these proceedings, then there should be more agencies, associations and networks that are willing to provide it and that can work with the public on such matters. There should also be some sort of document sent to complainants that explains the formal case process more thoroughly and outlines what to expect.

In the end, this case really should have never reached your desk. It could have been rectified at the informal level last year. To this day, it is still not clear to me as to all of the options that a complainant has when it comes to your proceedings. I was never presented with the chance to resolve this via a mediation level, one that is administered by the commission. That potentially could have resolved this matter. Not until the day of the hearing did I learn of the de novo process that would govern the hearing. A simple matter of taking the baton from the informal level and correcting the errors of an investigator turned into throwing the whole case into a wood chipper and then trying to fit the new pieces into legalese. As for how this particular special agent decided the formal complaint, that is another topic of discussion to be dealt with shortly.

I also would be remiss if I did not point out that the commission should really do more to help all citizens with these sorts of filings. When contacted, not one office/department within the commission was able to provide the requested assistance. I was not asking them to tell me what to say, rather I needed help with the filings step itself. This particular stage of the formal complaints process could be improved to better aid those who have limited abilities and/or technological resources.

I implore you to request updated copies of the caller logs and account activity reports from this utility. The fact that this matter has to be put in front of you at the present time speaks for itself. If the company did not operate in bad faith all along, then this matter could have and should have been resolved ages

ago. Just look at what has occurred in the past six months alone with this company. It has been nothing but stonewalling, going back and forth, and heading around and around on these matters.

This company is grossly mismanaged. All these years later, it is still operating as it did during the pandemic. Call representatives are working remotely and have no direct access to supervisors. Employees are not in close proximity to other personnel or departments. Work orders are issued but never completed. Lack of proper training often causes representatives to work against customers by spreading misinformation or by taking things in the wrong direction. Let us not forget the fact that the company's phone lines still perform poorly. All in all, this company is quite dysfunctional..

You really should seek out the supervisors that have had a role in this these past several months. These were women by the name of Elizabeth, Taylor, etc., who either claimed they would do something and never did or who had the pleasure of calling me a second time months after I had spoken to them originally, with still no results. You can also speak to the representative that completed the recent re-certification, seeing as she witnessed a big black hole during the process. By the way, Elizabeth was the supervisor who freely admitted to me that the company's rollout of the revised plan was nothing short of a disaster. The recorded conversations do not lie, so it would behoove you to request those so that you truly understand how much a nightmare this has been for our family.

With all that said, I will now move along to what the special agent put forth regarding this case.