

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Jennifer Wentworth	:	
	:	
v.	:	C-2024-3050884
	:	
PPL Electric Utilities Corporation	:	

CONTINUANCE ORDER

On August 26, 2024, Jennifer Wentworth (Ms. Wentworth or Complainant) filed a Formal Complaint against PPL Electric Utilities Corporation (PPL). In her Complaint, Ms. Wentworth avers that PPL is threatening to shut off her service or has already shut off her service; she would like a payment arrangement; and the payment plan is too high for her to afford. As relief, Ms. Wentworth requests a smaller payment plan that she can afford monthly.

On September 16, 2024, PPL filed an answer to Ms. Wentworth’s Complaint. PPL admits that Complainant is seeking a payment arrangement and that the Company has issued a termination notice to the Complainant. PPL states that Complainant was enrolled in Ontrack, the Company’s Customer Assistance Program, on August 4, 2023, but was removed from OnTrack on April 15, 2024, and placed on OnTrack Budget Billing. PPL avers that Ms. Wentworth will be eligible to recertify for OnTrack in December 2024. PPL states that Ms. Wentworth’s service has not been terminated.

On September 24, 2024, the Commission issued an initial telephonic hearing notice setting a call-in telephonic hearing for this matter for November 20, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. In anticipation of that hearing, I issued a prehearing order on September 25, 2024, setting forth various rules that would govern the November 20, 2024 hearing.

On September 24, 2024, I received an e-mail from counsel for PPL, requesting that the November 20, 2024 hearing be rescheduled due a potential scheduling conflict. Counsel for PPL also stated that Ms. Wentworth did not object to rescheduling the November 20, 2024 hearing. On October 3, 2024, an order was issued granting the continuance request and rescheduling the hearing to December 3, 2024 at 10 a.m.

The December 3, 2024 hearing was held as scheduled. Mr. Wentworth appeared, representing herself. Counsel for PPL appeared along with one witness. Parties engaged in settlement discussions during the hearing. Although a settlement was not achieved at the hearing, both parties agreed to a continuance so that further settlement discussions could take place, which may result in satisfaction of Ms. Wentworth's Complaint without the need for an evidentiary hearing.

Section 5.483 of the Commission's regulations provides presiding officers with the authority to regulate the course of proceedings. 52 Pa.Code § 5.483(a). Presiding officers are required to conduct fair and impartial hearings and maintain order. 52 Pa.Code § 5.485(a). Except as otherwise provided by statute, requests for continuance of hearings or for extension of time in which to perform an act required or allowed to be done at or within a specified time by this title or by order of the Commission or presiding officer, shall be by motion in writing, timely filed with the Commission, stating the facts on which the application rests. 52 Pa.Code § 1.15(b). Only for good cause shown will requests for continuance be considered. *Id.* The Commission has recognized the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's definition of good cause as "conduct which is reasonable under all the circumstances, thereby justifying the [c]laimant's actions." *Smart Meter Procurement and Installation*, Docket No. M-2009-2092655 (Order entered November 4, 2020); *In re Application of Penn Access Corporation and Digital Direct of Pittsburgh, Inc.*, 1992 Pa. PUC LEXIS 56 (Pa. P.U.C. 1992) (citing *Frumento v. Unemployment Comp. Bd. of Review*, 351 A.2d 631 (Pa. 1976)).

In this case, there is good cause for a continuance to be granted and for the December 3, 2024 hearing to be continued. Both parties agreed to the continuance. Also, the Commission strongly encourages settlement. *See* 52 Pa. Code § 5.231(a). Therefore, good cause

exists to allow a continuance for possible settlement, or other action that may lead to avoiding unnecessary expenditure of parties' resources. Even if the parties are unable to settle this case, they may still resolve some of the questions or issues during their discussions. If the parties reach an agreement on all issues, a formal hearing will not be necessary. The parties are also reminded that the presiding officer may participate in settlement discussions upon agreement of all parties. 52 Pa.Code § 5.223(c); *see also*, 52 Pa.Code § 5.231(c).

As discussed during the December 3, 2024 hearing, parties are also directed to provide me a status report, either separately or jointly, by January 10, 2025. The status report(s) should include the parties' understanding of what issues are still in dispute and the need for further proceedings.

ORDER

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the evidentiary hearing scheduled for December 3, 2024 is continued;
2. That parties are directed to send to the undersigned a status report, either separately or jointly, by January 10, 2025, to include the parties' understanding of what issues are still in dispute and the need for further proceedings.

Date: December 4, 2024

/s/
John M. Coogan
Administrative Law Judge

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