

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-3265

**Petition of Columbia Gas of
Pennsylvania, Inc.**

Public Meeting held March 12, 2009
2083915-LAW
Docket No. P-2009-2083915

MOTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN TYRONE J. CHRISTY

Before us is the Petition of Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (Columbia) Requesting Approval to Use Settlement Proceeds to Fund Residential Hardship Fund and Provide PGC Credits to Small Commercial Customers (Petition). Columbia's Petition, filed on January 9, 2009, requests authorization to use proceeds from a settlement approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on November 6, 2008, under which Columbia will receive \$768,942 from Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation. According to Columbia's petition, FERC expects each affected regulatory commission to pass the settlement proceeds through to their ratepayers. Columbia proposes to flow through \$196,080 of the proceeds to customers served under Rate Schedules SGSS, SCD, and SGS Priority One through the purchased gas cost rates.

Rather than similarly flowing through a portion of the settlement proceeds to all residential customers, Columbia proposes to allocate \$572,862 to its Hardship Fund Program. The Hardship Fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to low-income, payment-troubled customers. I support this portion of Columbia's request. If we were to direct that this portion of the settlement proceeds be flowed through to residential customers through Columbia's purchased gas cost rates, an average residential customer would receive a very small credit. I agree that the better use of these funds is to supplement Columbia's Hardship Fund that is used to assist its low-income customers.

Columbia further requests that the income eligibility under its Hardship Fund be expanded from 200% to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This would significantly expand the eligibility for the Hardship Fund based on a one-time infusion of settlement proceeds. I believe that this could create expectations for continued funding on a permanent basis to serve these higher-income customers that would be difficult to meet. Given that the Hardship Fund is funded through voluntary customer contributions with a company match, one would not expect the funding to increase significantly in future years. In addition, I believe that hardship funds should focus on serving the needs of lower-income customers. Expanding eligibility from 200% to 250% of FPL would expand eligibility to include families with incomes between \$44,100 and \$55,125.¹

¹ The 2009 Federal Poverty Guidelines, which were published in the Federal Register on January 23, 2009, establish an income level of \$22,050 for a family of four living in the District of Columbia or one of the lower 48 states.

THEREFORE, I MOVE:

1. That the Petition of Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. Requesting Approval to Use Settlement Proceeds to Fund Residential Hardship Fund and Provide PGC Credits to Small Commercial Customers be granted in part and denied in part consistent with this motion.
2. That the Office of Special Assistants prepare the necessary Opinion and Order.

DATE

TYRONE J. CHRISTY, VICE CHAIRMAN