

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Complaint and petition for declaratory relief against BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. for refusal to provide telephone service to a new development, by Litestream Holdings, LLC.

DOCKET NO. 060684-TP
ORDER NO. PSC-07-0614-FOF-TP
ISSUED: July 31, 2007

The following Commissioners participated in the disposition of this matter:

LISA POLAK EDGAR, Chairman
MATTHEW M. CARTER II
KATRINA J. McMURRIAN
NANCY ARGENZIANO
NATHAN A. SKOP

ORDER DISMISSING COMPLAINT WITHOUT PREJUDICE

BY THE COMMISSION:

I. Case Background

On October 17, 2006, Litestream Holdings, LLC (Litestream) filed a complaint for declaratory relief against BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. d/b/a AT&T Florida (AT&T Florida). In the complaint Litestream alleges that AT&T Florida has threatened to “refuse to provide its telephone service to a new development if the developer enters into an agreement with Litestream to market Litestream’s cable modem broadband services on an exclusive basis to residents or an agreement giving Litestream the exclusive right to provide cable television and broadband services to the development.”

On October 27, 2006, AT&T Florida filed an unopposed motion for an extension of time until November 17, 2006, in which to file its response. By Order No. PSC-06-0936-PCO-TL, issued November 7, 2006, AT&T Florida was given until November 17, 2006, in which to file its response. On November 17, AT&T Florida filed its response.

On December 7, 2006, Litestream filed a Motion to Amend Complaint and Opposition to Request to Dismiss. The Motion to Amend Complaint was granted by Order No. PSC-06-1033-PCO-TP, issued on December 14, 2006. On January 4, 2007, AT&T Florida filed its Response to Litestream’s Amended Complaint. On January 12, 2007, Litestream responded to AT&T Florida’s assertions of affirmative defenses.

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On February 8, 2007, Litestream filed a Motion For Leave to File Second Amended Complaint. On February 21, 2007, AT&T Florida filed its response to Litestream's Second Amended Complaint. The Motion to File Second Amended Complaint was granted by Order No. PSC-07-0187-PCO-TP, issued on February 27, 2007.

During its 1995 session, the Legislature created Section 364.025, Florida Statutes, Universal Services. At the time, Section 364.025(1), Florida Statutes, provided in part:

It is the intent of the Legislature that universal service objectives be maintained after the local exchange market is opened to competitively provided services. It is also the intent of the Legislature that during this transition period the ubiquitous nature of the local exchange telecommunications companies be used to satisfy these objectives. For a period of 4 years after the effective date of this section, each local exchange telecommunications company shall be required to furnish basic local exchange telecommunications service within a reasonable time period to any person requesting such service within the company's service territory.

Section 364.025, Florida Statutes, has been amended several times since its 1995 adoption by the Legislature. Each time the carrier-of-last-resort obligation has neared expiration, the Legislature has amended the statute, extending the date on which the carrier-of-last-resort obligation would sunset.

In 2006, the Legislature amended Section 364.025, Florida Statutes, to define the conditions under which an incumbent local exchange company would not be required to serve as carrier of last resort for certain multitenant business or residential properties. Importantly, the carrier-of-last-resort obligation was, in all other respects, retained by the Legislature.

II. Parties' Arguments

Litestream's Second Amended Complaint

AT&T Florida is the carrier of last resort (COLR) in St. Johns County for the development known as Glen St. Johns (Development) being developed by D.R. Horton, Inc.-Jacksonville (Developer). Litestream alleges that AT&T Florida has refused to install telecommunications facilities and will not provide Telephone Service to the Development if the Developer enters into an exclusive marketing agreement,¹ an exclusive service agreement,² or a

¹ An "exclusive marketing agreement" is an agreement whereby the Developer agrees not to allow other providers to market their services using the Developer's materials or facilities, and prohibits the Developer from marketing services of other providers.

² An "exclusive service agreement" is an agreement whereby the provider has the exclusive right to provide the service to the extent authorized by law.

bulk services agreement,³ for Broadband Services and/or Cable Services with any provider other than AT&T Florida (collectively referred to as “Agreements”). Litestream alleges that AT&T Florida’s actions have interfered with the Developer’s right to contract with the Broadband Services and /or Cable Services provider of its choice. Litestream contends that AT&T Florida cannot refuse to provide landline Telephone Service to a development simply because the developer prefers a provider other than AT&T Florida for broadband service and/or video service.

Litestream explains that to provide its Cable and Broadband Services to the Development, it will be constructing and operating an equipment facility, known as a “headend,” which will be a permanent facility in the development. In addition, as part of this “headend,” Litestream will be requesting and purchasing AT&T Florida’s Telephone Service and therefore will be a customer of AT&T Florida. Litestream contends that it has standing as a customer of AT&T Florida in the Development. Litestream also argues that AT&T Florida’s implied tying arrangement is similar to other types of anticompetitive economic behavior under Chapter 364 that is considered illegal, such as cross-subsidization and predatory pricing.

In Count 1, Litestream contends that the carrier-of-last-resort obligation requires AT&T Florida to provide basic local telecommunications service to all persons within its service area. See Order No. PSC-95-1592-FO-TP, issued, in Docket No. 950696-TP; Sections 364.025(1), 364.03, and 364.01(4)(a), Florida Statutes (these statutes discuss our to ensure that basic local telecommunications services are available to all consumers). In addition, Count 2 argues that AT&T Florida’s refusal to provide telephone services to the Development if the Developer enters into an Agreement with Litestream is unjust, unreasonably discriminatory, and anticompetitive in violation of Chapter 364, Florida Statutes.

AT&T Florida’s Response

AT&T Florida claims that the complaint is moot. AT&T Florida states that it has never threatened to deny service but rather, has in fact advised Litestream and Developer of its intent to provide service to the Development. AT&T Florida also disputes that Litestream has standing under the COLR statute to bring a claim for relief. Next, AT&T Florida denies that this Commission has jurisdiction over the claims asserted in Litestream’s complaint. Finally, AT&T Florida addresses each paragraph of the Complaint and disputes several assertions made therein.

Opposition to Request to Dismiss

Litestream responds that, during a conference call between our staff, Litestream, and AT&T Florida, AT&T Florida stated that it did not know if it would provide telephone service if the developer enters into an agreement with Litestream. Therefore, Litestream contends that it is uncertain whether AT&T Florida will fulfill its carrier-of-last-resort obligation to residents of

³ A “bulk services agreement” is an agreement whereby the provider bills the Developer or homeowner’s association for certain services provided to residents, and residents pay for such services through their homeowners’ assessments.

Glen St. Johns if the developer signs an agreement for cable and/or broadband services with Litestream.

Amended Complaint

In the Amended Complaint, Litestream alleges that AT&T Florida has a general policy of withholding its commitment to construct facilities or to provide telephone services to developments that enter into Agreements with competitors. Litestream argues that this policy affects its operations not only in the Development, but also in any development where it seeks to offer its cable or broadband and cable service. Litestream asserts that this policy makes developers hesitant to enter into agreements for cable or broadband and cable service; or requires developers to contract solely with AT&T Florida for bundled services (i.e. telephone, DSL, and video). Litestream contends that this will reduce competition generally and slow the deployment of broadband with greater bandwidth in Florida.

Litestream seeks a declaration that AT&T Florida is required, pursuant to section 364.025, Florida Statutes, "to provide telephone service to the development, or to a similarly situated development, regardless of whether the developer enters into an exclusive marketing agreement, exclusive service agreement, or a bulk service agreement, for Broadband Services, and/or Cable Services, with Litestream, an AT&T Florida competitor that will not provide Communications Services to such development." Litestream also seeks a declaration that AT&T Florida's practice of threatening to refuse, or refusing, to provide telephone service if a developer enters into an Agreement for cable or broadband and cable services is unjust, unreasonably discriminatory, prejudicial and anticompetitive in violation of Chapter 364, Florida Statutes.

Finally, Litestream requests that we order AT&T Florida to offer its telephone service to the Development, upon the Developer's request, even if the Developer enters into any of the Agreements with Litestream.

AT&T Florida's Response to Amended Complaint

AT&T Florida states that it intends to provide telecommunications services to the residents of the Development, so there is no issue in dispute and the Amended Complaint should be dismissed. AT&T Florida also asserts that Litestream lacks standing because there is "no allegation that AT&T Florida has refused to provide service to Litestream (or, for that matter, to any customer requesting service)." AT&T Florida proceeds to either admit or deny each paragraph in the Amended Complaint based on its understanding of the facts and the law. AT&T Florida concludes by denying that there are no material facts in dispute.

Litestream Response to AT&T Florida's Assertion of Affirmative Defenses

On January 12, 2007, Litestream filed a response to AT&T Florida's Assertion of Affirmative Defenses claiming they are without merit. Litestream again asserts that during a conference call AT&T Florida did not know if it would provide telephone service if the developer enters into an agreement with Litestream. Therefore, Litestream contends that it is

uncertain whether AT&T Florida will fulfill its carrier of last resort obligation to residents of Glen St. Johns if the developer signs an agreement for cable and/or broadband services with Litestream. Litestream states that Chapter 364, Florida Statutes, provides for causes of action and remedies against a telecommunications company's anticompetitive behavior. See §§ 364.01, and 364.3381, Florida Statutes. Next, Litestream asserts that it meets the standing requirements under *Agrico Chemical Co. v. Dept. of Environmental Reg.*, 406 So. 2d 478 (Fla. 2d DCA 1981), in that it has suffered an injury in fact and that the injury is of a type or nature which the proceeding is designed to protect. Litestream states that "[AT&T Florida's] actions have harmed Litestream by affecting Litestream's substantial interest in being able to provide Broadband and/or Cable Services pursuant to an agreement with the Developer." In addition, "the harm to Litestream's competitive interests is of the type or nature which this proceeding before the Commission is designed to protect."

III. Analysis and Decision

Before this matter should be set for a hearing under 120.57, Florida Statutes, we must determine the sufficiency of Litestream's petition.

Test for sufficiency of petition

To meet the standard for a valid petition under Rule 28-106.201(2), Florida Administrative Code, a petitioner must explain how the petitioner's substantial interest will be affected by the agency determination. "Before one can be considered to have a substantial interest in the outcome of the proceeding he must show 1) that he will suffer injury in fact which is of sufficient immediacy to entitle him to a section 120.57 hearing, and 2) that this substantial injury is of a type or nature which the proceeding is designed to protect. The first aspect of the test deals with the degree of injury. The second deals with the nature of the injury." *Agrico*, 406 So. 2d at 482.

The first cause of action raised by Litestream is AT&T Florida's alleged violation of its COLR obligation. We agree that AT&T Florida's actions, if true, would result in substantial injury to both the Developer and residents of the subdivision, which Section 364.025, Florida Statutes, is designed to protect. However, we can find no support for the proposition that a competitive broadband/video provider can allege injury on behalf of a potential voice customer. Moreover, Litestream has not alleged that it represents the interests of the Developer or residents of the subdivision. Consequently, we find that Litestream lacks standing to seek compliance of AT&T Florida's COLR obligation.

The next cause of action is based on AT&T Florida's alleged unjust, unreasonably discriminatory and anticompetitive practices in violation of Chapter 364, Florida Statutes. Specifically, AT&T Florida's refusal to provide telephone service to residents of the Development if the Developer enters into an exclusive marketing agreement, exclusive service agreement, or a bulk service agreement for Broadband Services and/or Cable Services. Litestream contends that this practice creates an unfair advantage for AT&T Florida and makes developers reluctant to sign such agreements. While we have concerns about the allegations

raised by Litestream, Litestream has failed to explain how its substantial interests as a broadband/video provider are within the zone of interest to be protected by Chapter 364, Florida Statutes. See 364.01(3), Florida Statutes, encouraging the competitive provision of *telecommunications services*; 364.01(4)(b), Florida Statutes, encouraging competition through flexible regulatory treatment among *providers of telecommunications service*; 364.01(4)(g), ensuring that all *providers of telecommunications services* are treated fairly, by preventing anticompetitive behavior and eliminating unnecessary regulatory restraint”. Nor is the injury alleged within the same type of anticompetitive behavior enumerated in the statute cited by Litestream. See 364.3381(3), Florida Statutes, which provides that the “Commission shall have continuing oversight jurisdiction over cross-subsidization, predatory pricing, or other similar anticompetitive behavior . . . and may investigate allegations of such practices.” *Fayad v. Clarendon Nat’l Ins. Co.*, 899 So. 2d 1082, 1089 (Fla. 2005)(the principal of *ejusdem generis* provides that “where general words follow an enumeration of specific words, the general words are construed as applying to the same kind or class as those that are specifically mentioned”).

As to Count 1, Litestream has failed to sufficiently allege standing to enforce AT&T Florida’s COLR obligation. As to Count 2, Litestream has failed to sufficiently allege that its interests as a broadband/video provider are designed to be protected by Chapter 364.⁴ Therefore, we find that the Petition shall be dismissed without prejudice.

We note that subsequent to Litestream’s initial filing, we issued an Order approving two letters AT&T Florida will forward to developers addressing its COLR obligation and Network Planning respectively. In the Order, we found that AT&T Florida’s proposed COLR letter complied with Section 364.025(6)(b), Florida Statutes and AT&T Florida’s proposed network planning letter was clear and did not contain statements in violation of Section 364.025(6)(d), Florida Statutes. Our review and subsequent approval of AT&T Florida’s COLR obligation and Network Planning letters directly address Litestream’s concerns regarding AT&T Florida’s anticompetitive behavior on a going forward basis. We further note that AT&T Florida has not affirmatively refused to offer service to Litestream nor is Litestream alleging that such refusal has occurred. It should be noted that AT&T Florida is the COLR and remains the COLR until it is determined that they are not the COLR through the waiver process.

Based on the foregoing, it is

ORDERED by the Florida Public Service Commission that Litestream Holdings, LLC’s Complaint for declaratory relief against BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. d/b/a AT&T Florida shall be dismissed without prejudice. It is further

⁴ While Litestream’s Complaint was styled as a Petition for Declaratory Relief, it was not filed as a Request for a Declaratory Statement under Rule 28-105.001, Florida Administrative Code. Nevertheless, had Litestream requested a Declaratory Statement based on the facts alleged in its Petition, such a request would be improper. See Rule 28-105.001, Florida Administrative Code, stating that “[a] declaratory statement is not the appropriate means for determining the conduct of another person or for obtaining a policy statement of general applicability from an agency.” *Regal Kitchens, Inc. v. Fla. Dept. of Rev.* 641 So. 2d 158, 162 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994)(stating that “an administrative agency may not use a declaratory statement as a vehicle for the adoption of broad agency policy or to provide statutory or rule interpretations that apply to an entire class of persons”).

ORDERED that this docket shall be closed.

By ORDER of the Florida Public Service Commission this 31st day of July, 2007.



ANN COLE
Commission Clerk

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NOTICE OF FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OR JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Florida Public Service Commission is required by Section 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, to notify parties of any administrative hearing or judicial review of Commission orders that is available under Sections 120.57 or 120.68, Florida Statutes, as well as the procedures and time limits that apply. This notice should not be construed to mean all requests for an administrative hearing or judicial review will be granted or result in the relief sought.

Any party adversely affected by the Commission's final action in this matter may request:

- 1) reconsideration of the decision by filing a motion for reconsideration with the Office of Commission Clerk, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, within fifteen (15) days of the issuance of this order in the form prescribed by Rule 25-22.060, Florida Administrative Code; or
- 2) judicial review by the Florida Supreme Court in the case of an electric, gas or telephone utility or the First District Court of Appeal in the case of a water and/or wastewater utility by filing a notice of appeal with the Office of Commission Clerk, and filing a copy of the notice of appeal and the filing fee with the appropriate court. This filing must be completed within thirty (30) days after the issuance of this order, pursuant to Rule 9.110, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure. The notice of appeal must be in the form specified in Rule 9.900(a), Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.