

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Petition for authority to
implement bi-monthly meter
reading program by City Gas
Company of Florida.

DOCKET NO. 971074-GU
ORDER NO. PSC-97-1534-FOF-GU
ISSUED: December 8, 1997

The following Commissioners participated in the disposition of
this matter:

JULIA L. JOHNSON, Chairman
J. TERRY DEASON
SUSAN F. CLARK
DIANE K. KIESLING
JOE GARCIA

NOTICE OF PROPOSED AGENCY ACTION
ORDER GRANTING PETITION FOR AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT BI-MONTHLY
METER READING PROGRAM

BY THE COMMISSION:

NOTICE is hereby given by the Florida Public Service
Commission that the action discussed herein is preliminary in
nature and will become final unless a person whose interests are
substantially affected files a petition for a formal proceeding,
pursuant to Rule 25-22.029, Florida Administrative Code.

On August 19, 1997, City Gas Company of Florida (City Gas)
petitioned this Commission for an exemption from the monthly meter
reading provisions of Rules 25-7.084(1) and 25-7.085(4) and (5),
Florida Administrative Code. Notice of City Gas' request for
exemption from these two rule requirements was published in the
Florida Administrative Weekly on October 10, 1997. We took final
action on this request at the November 18, 1997, Agenda Conference.

We approved a similar bi-monthly meter reading program for
Peoples Gas System, Inc. (Peoples) in Order No. PSC-96-0583-FOF-GU,
issued May 6, 1996, in Docket No. 960308-GU. In that Order, we
allowed Peoples to use scheduled estimate meter reading every other
month for the purpose of billing. We granted Peoples and exemption
from the monthly meter reading requirements of Rules 25-7.084(1)
and 25-7.085(4) and (5), Florida Administrative Code, in order to

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permit Peoples' implementation of its program. City Gas Seeks the same exemption for purposes of improving overall customer service and reducing meter reading expenses by implementing bi-monthly meter reading.

In filing for exemption from the monthly meter reading rules, City Gas has shown that approximately 94,000 residential customers will be involved in this program. City Gas anticipates saving approximately \$143,000 in meter reading expenses annually. City Gas has complied with Section 365.05, Florida Statutes and Rules 25-7.084(1) and 25-7.085(4) and (5), Florida Administrative Code, in developing and estimation methodology to determine each customer's scheduled estimate. This methodology uses factors tailored to each individual customer. These factors are based on historical usage patterns and current weather data. By using these factors in a formula, an estimated reading is determined for each month that an actual reading is not taken. Any errors in estimation will automatically be corrected in the following month when an actual meter reading is taken.

City Gas has demonstrated that instituting bi-monthly meter reading will likely reduce costs, that no additional costs will be incurred by the general body of ratepayers for this service, and that each customer's interest in receiving an accurate bill is adequately protected. The proposed bi-monthly meter reading program, as herein described, is consistent with the underlying Statutes, Rules and Commission authority. We believe that, given the factors outlined above, it would violate principles of fairness not to approve bi-monthly meter reading for City Gas because we have already approved bi-monthly meter reading for Peoples Gas under similar circumstances.

City Gas has already filed new tariff sheets reflecting the implementation of bi-monthly meter reading. These sheets were approved at the November 18, 1997, Agenda Conference. In order to monitor City Gas' bi-monthly meter reading program to insure that it is operating as described, we require City Gas to file monitoring data on a quarterly basis for a period of one year from the first scheduled estimated meter reading date. City Gas should include the following data in the quarterly filing: number of customers in the program; number of customer complaints, and the reasons for the complaints; number of customers using postage-paid postcards; number of customers using phoned-in meter readings; savings in meter reading expenses; and, narrative of any problems in implementation.

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If no person whose substantial interests are affected by the action proposed by this notice of proposed agency action, files a petition for formal proceeding within the 21 day protest period, this docket should be closed.

It is therefore

ORDERED that the petition for authority to implement a bi-monthly meter reading program by City Gas Company of Florida is granted. It is further

ORDERED that City Gas Company of Florida file quarterly monitoring data as described herein with the Division of Records and Reporting for one year from the first scheduled estimated meter reading. It is further

ORDERED that the provisions of this Order, issued as proposed agency action, shall become final and effective unless an appropriate petition, in the form provided by Rule 25-22.036, Florida Administrative Code, is received by the Director, Division of Records and Reporting, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, by the close of business on the date set forth in the "Notice of Further Proceedings or Judicial Review" attached hereto. It is further

ORDERED that in the event this Order becomes final, this Docket shall be closed.

By ORDER of the Florida Public Service Commission this 8th day of December, 1997.

BLANCA S. BAYÓ, Director
Division of Records and Reporting

By: Kay Flynn
Kay Flynn, Chief
Bureau of Records

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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.

Mediation may be available on a case-by-case basis. If mediation is conducted, it does not affect a substantially interested person's right to a hearing.

The action proposed herein is preliminary in nature and will not become effective or final, except as provided by Rule 25-22.029, Florida Administrative Code. Any person whose substantial interests are affected by the action proposed by this order may file a petition for a formal proceeding, as provided by Rule 25-22.029(4), Florida Administrative Code, in the form provided by Rule 25-22.036(7)(a) and (f), Florida Administrative Code. This petition must be received by the Director, Division of Records and Reporting, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, by the close of business on December 29, 1997.

In the absence of such a petition, this order shall become effective on the day subsequent to the above date as provided by Rule 25-22.029(6), Florida Administrative Code.

Any objection or protest filed in this docket before the issuance date of this order is considered abandoned unless it satisfies the foregoing conditions and is renewed within the specified protest period.

If this order becomes final and effective on the date described above, any party substantially affected may request judicial review by the Florida Supreme Court in the case of an electric, gas or telephone utility or by the First District Court of Appeal in the case of a water or wastewater utility by filing a notice of appeal with the Director, Division of Records and Reporting 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 of the effective date of this order, pursuant to Rule 9.110, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure. The

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notice of appeal must be in the form specified in Rule 9.900(a),
Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.