

**BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

Steve Schmidt)	
Nanci Schmidt)	
11224 Terwilligers Run Drive)	
Cincinnati, Ohio 45249)	
)	
Complainants)	Case No. 17-2335-EL-CSS
)	
v.)	
)	
Duke Energy Ohio, Inc.)	
)	
Respondent)	

ANSWER OF DUKE ENERGY OHIO, INC.

For its Answer to the Complaint of Steve Schmidt and Nanci Schmidt (collectively Complainants), Duke Energy Ohio, Inc., (Duke Energy Ohio or Respondent) states as follows:

1. The Complaint is not in a form allowing for specific admission or denial as to individual allegations. Accordingly, Duke Energy Ohio generally denies the allegations set out in the Complaint.
2. In response to the allegations contained in the third paragraph of the Complaint, Duke Energy Ohio denies that it is negatively impacting property values in Symmes Township and the city of Montgomery. Duke Energy Ohio admits that it is exercising its lawful right, pursuant to grants of easement, to engage in vegetation management activities that include, but are not limited to, removing vegetation within its easement and right-of-way. Such removal is necessary to enable the continued safe and reliable operation of high-voltage power lines used in the provision of service to Duke Energy Ohio's customers,

including those located in Symmes Township and the city of Montgomery. All remaining allegations of this paragraph are denied.

3. Duke Energy Ohio denies the allegations contained in the fourth paragraph of the Complaint. Answering further, Duke Energy Ohio states that its actions are consistent with its express grants of easement and with its Programs for Inspection, Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Distribution and Transmission Lines, Section (f), as approved on June 13, 2016. All remaining allegations of this paragraph are denied.
4. In response to the allegations contained in the fifth paragraph of the Complaint, Duke Energy Ohio submits that statements regarding requested relief are not allegations to which a response is required. Duke Energy Ohio further submits that Complainants lack standing to assert relief on behalf of other citizens of Symmes Township and the City of Montgomery. However, to the extent a response is required, Duke Energy Ohio denies that it is using toxic herbicides on Complainants' property. Answering further, Duke Energy Ohio states that its actions are necessary to enable the continued safe and reliable operation of high-voltage power lines used in the provision of service to Duke Energy Ohio's customers, including those located in Symmes Township and the city of Montgomery and are consistent with its express grants of easement and with its Programs for Inspection, Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Distribution and Transmission Lines, Section (f), as approved on June 13, 2016. Duke Energy Ohio further states that the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (Commission) is without jurisdiction to issue equitable relief, including the relief requested herein. All remaining allegations of this paragraph are denied.

5. With regard to the documents attached to the Complaint, Duke Energy Ohio states the easement provided by Complainants are not relevant to their property or the lawful actions Duke Energy Ohio intends to undertake on Complainants' property so as to enable the continued safe and reliable operation of its high-voltage transmission system. Answering further, Duke Energy Ohio states that the easement provides it with the unambiguous right to remove trees and other obstructions in the easement and right-of-way. However, with regard to certain statements therein, Duke Energy Ohio states that the terms of its lawfully obtained easements speak for themselves and further denies that its request, as docketed under Case No. 16-915-EL-ESS, has not been approved. Said request was approved pursuant to O.A.C. 4901:1-10-27(F)(2). Duke Energy Ohio further states that it has engaged in extensive community outreach, interacting with individual property owners on whose property the Respondent possesses easement rights and will be working. All remaining allegations, as inferred or implied by the documents attached to the Complaint, are denied.
6. Duke Energy Ohio denies each and every allegation of fact and conclusion of law not expressly admitted herein.

AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

1. Duke Energy Ohio asserts as an affirmative defense the easement attached to the Complaint does not concern the property owned by Complainants. Such easement, therefore, cannot support the Complaint. Answering further, such easement expressly confirms the rights of Duke Energy Ohio to engage in vegetation management activities with regard to the property on which such easement exists.

2. The Complainants do not assert any allegations of fact that would give rise to a cognizable claim against Duke Energy Ohio.
3. Duke Energy Ohio asserts as an affirmative defense that pursuant to R.C. 4905.26 and O.A.C. 4901-9-01-(B)(3), Complainants have failed to set forth reasonable grounds for complaint.
4. Duke Energy Ohio asserts as an affirmative defense that Complainants have not stated any request for relief that can be granted by this Commission.
5. Duke Energy Ohio states as an affirmative defense that Complainants lack standing to assert any claims against the Company in respect of property for which he is not the lawful property owner of record.
6. Duke Energy Ohio asserts that to the extent Complainants are seeking monetary damages, such relief is beyond the scope of the Commission's jurisdiction.
7. Duke Energy Ohio asserts that to the extent the Complainants are seeking equitable relief, such relief is beyond the scope of the Commission's jurisdiction.
8. Duke Energy Ohio asserts that it has superior property rights, as confirmed by lawful grants of easement.
9. Duke Energy Ohio reserves the right to raise additional affirmative defenses or to withdraw any of the foregoing affirmative defenses as may become necessary during the investigation and discovery of this matter.

CONCLUSION

WHEREFORE, having fully answered, Duke Energy Ohio respectfully requests that the Commission dismiss the Complaint of Steve Schmidt and Nanci Schmidt for failure to set forth reasonable grounds for the Complaint and to deny Complainant's request for relief, if any.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Elizabeth H. Watts

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing Answer of Duke Energy Ohio, Inc., was served via regular US Mail postage prepaid, or by electronic mail service, this 22nd day of November 2017, upon the following:

Steve Schmidt
Nanci Schmidt
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Cincinnati, OH 45249

/s/ Elizabeth H. Watts

Elizabeth H. Watts