

BEFORE

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Application of)
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. to Revise its)
Tariffs to Substitute an Automated Meter) Case No. 04-1166-GA-ATA
Reading Charge for the Current Remote)
Index Charge.)

ENTRY

The Commission finds:

- (1) On July 23, 2004, Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. ("Columbia") filed an application to revise its tariffs to reflect a different technology for obtaining remote meter readings. Columbia plans to discontinue the installation of remote meter indexes used to obtain readings from indoor meters, and plans to instead begin installation of automated meter reading ("AMR") devices. Part No. 40(g) of Columbia Gas of Ohio's ("Columbia") tariff, on sheet number 15, sets forth a \$35 charge for the installation of a remote meter index. To reflect the operational change over to AMR devices, Columbia proposes to revise the language in Part 40(g) of its tariff to substitute the term "automated meter reading device" for "remote index". Thus, Columbia proposes to offer AMR devices to customers at the same rate that is currently charged for remote indexes.
- (2) In 1985, in order to address meter reading problems associated with access to indoor meters, Columbia adopted language in its tariff providing that Columbia would install remote indexes for customers for a charge of \$35. With a remote index a meter reader can obtain a meter reading without having to enter a customer's home. The remote indexes used to obtain readings from indoor meters are mechanical in nature. As a result, there is a potential for error in the readings.
- (3) In order to address the mechanical deficiencies of remote indexes, Columbia proposes to replace its remote indexes with automated meter reading ("AMR") equipment. Once Columbia begins the installation of AMR devices, it intends to discontinue the installation of the remote indexes.
- (4) According to the application, AMR equipment consists of two main components. The first component is an encoder, recorder, transmitter ("ERT"). ERTs contain, among other elements, a battery and a transmitting device. The transmitting device inside an ERT reads the meter and sends the reading to the second AMR component, a handheld meter-reading device. Thus, using AMR equipment, a Columbia meter reader can obtain a reading from an inside meter without having to gain physical access to the meter.

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- (5) The application states that, since AMR equipment is more reliable than the remote indexes, AMR devices would eliminate many of the failure problems associated with the remote indexes today. Additionally, installation of an AMR device takes approximately twenty minutes, compared to the two hours it takes to install remote index equipment. Installation of AMR devices also does not cause a structural breach in the homes in which they are installed.
- (6) The application states that the cost to Columbia for installing new AMR devices is greater than the \$35 charge per device listed in Part 40(g) of the tariff. However, in order to minimize the impact upon customers, Columbia at this time proposes to maintain the charge for the installation of AMR equipment at \$35 – the same charge currently applicable to the installation of remote indexes.
- (7) The Commission has reviewed the application and finds it to be reasonable and in the public interest and will be approved.

It is, therefore,

ORDERED, That Columbia's proposal to revise its tariffs to reflect a new remote meter reading technology is approved. It is, further,


ORDERED, That Columbia is authorized to file in final form four complete printed copies of its revised tariff regarding the automated meter reading devices consistent with the findings of this Entry. One copy shall be filed in this case docket, one copy shall be filed in Columbia's TRF docket and the remaining two copies shall be designated for distribution to the Commission staff. It is, further,

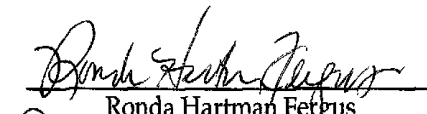
ORDERED, That nothing in this Finding and Order shall be binding upon this Commission in any future proceeding or investigation involving the justness or reasonableness of any rate, charge, or regulation of Columbia. It is, further,

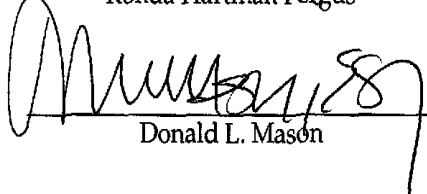
ORDERED, That this docket be closed of record. It is, further,

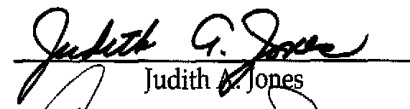
ORDERED, That a copy of this Entry be served upon the Applicant and its counsel and any interested parties of record.

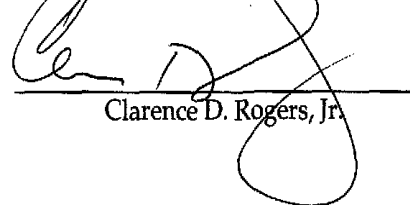
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO


Alan R. Schriber, Chairman


Ronda Hartman Fergus


Donald L. Mason


Judith G. Jones


Clarence D. Rogers, Jr.

SP:dj

Entered in the Journal

AUG 18 2004



Renee J. Jenkins
Secretary