

75 E. Lancaster Ave.
Ardmore, PA 19003-2323

July 16, 2012

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Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Attn: Secretary
P.O. Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

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Dear Commissioners:

Lower Merion Township wishes to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed Rulemaking Amendment to 52 Pa. Code Sec. 59.18 regarding Gas Meter Location. Lower Merion Township has been a leader in preserving historic and cultural resources at the municipal level. The Township has a total of 10 historic districts, including four local districts, three National Register districts and three local and National Register districts. The Township has also adopted an Historic Resource Overlay District ordinance that protects individual properties throughout the Township, outside of the historic districts. We believe these historic buildings contribute to the value and character of our community. As such, Lower Merion requests that the PUC consider making changes to the proposed amendment in order to provide adequate protection for both national and locally historic buildings.

The proposed regulation provides some consideration to historic properties by allowing meters to be located within a building when acceptable outside locations are unavailable due to restrictions in federal Historic Districts. However, the current language is open to a variety of interpretations and does not require the impacts to historic resources to be considered when

relocating the meters and regulators. In order to address this issue, we suggest the following changes be made to the amendment:

1. Provide a definition of the term “Historic Resources”.

The amendment does not clearly define which historic resources qualify for inside meter locations. Does the exception apply to all buildings within historic districts that are listed on and/or considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? Or, can the exception apply to buildings in local historic districts that are also either on or eligible for listing on the National Register? What about historically significant buildings that are outside of a national and/or local district and/or those that are significant locally but have no determination of eligibility, such as those regulated under the Township’s Historic Resource Overlay District. In order to address this issue, we recommend applying the exception to local historic districts as well as to any other buildings designated as locally significant as noted below:

- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing resource on a nationally registered historic district.
- Deemed to be eligible, with the proper documentation, for the National Register.
- Included as a contributing resource in a local historic district, as recognized by the State Historic Preservation Office.
- Designated locally significant by the municipality.

2. Address the visual impacts of outdoor regulators and shut offs.

Installing a regulator on the front of a historic building will have impacts on the character of that building. Although the amendment allows meters to be left inside in

some cases, it does not require alternatives be utilized to minimize the impact of installing the regulator outside. Alternatives could include 1) installing the regulator in a discreet location such as on the side or rear of a building, 2) screening the equipment from view with vegetation or other screens such as a wood fence or other appropriate materials or 3) minimizing the appearance of the equipment by painting it.

3. Improve property owner and community involvement.

The amendment should specify a process for notifying property owners about the project so that they have complete information and sufficient time to participate in and make informed decisions about where their meter is to be relocated.

Lower Merion Township strongly recommends that the PUC further revise the proposed amendment to take into consideration impacts to all historic buildings and how those impacts can be best mitigated.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Township if you have any questions or if we can provide additional assistance with regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Rogan, AICP
President
Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners

July 16, 2012

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Attn: Secretary
P.O. Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

RE: COMMENTS ON DOCKET NO. L-2009-210715, RULEMAKING AMENDMENT TO 52 PA CODE SEC. 59.18 METER LOCATIONS

Dear Commissioners:

Lower Merion Township wishes to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed Rulemaking Amendment to 52 Pa. Code Sec. 59.18 regarding the location of Gas Service Equipments (as defined herein to include Meters, Regulators and Shut-off Valves). Lower Merion Township has been a leader in preserving historic and cultural resources at the municipal level. The Township has a total of ten (10) Historic Districts, including four Local Districts, three National Register Districts and three Local and National Register Districts. The Township has also adopted an Historic Resource Overlay District ordinance that protects individual properties throughout the Township, that fall outside the boundaries of the historic districts. We strongly believe these individually listed historic resources also contribute to the value and character of our community. As such, Lower Merion requests that the PUC consider making changes to the proposed Amendment in order to provide adequate protection for all types of recognized Historic Resources found in this Township and throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including those historic buildings outside of Historic Districts, but listed individually on both national and/or local Historic Registers.

The proposed PUC Regulation provides some consideration to Historic Resources by allowing Gas Service Equipment to be located within a building when acceptable outside locations present a conflict with the integrity of a Historic Resource. However, the language as proposed is open to a variety of interpretations and does not require consideration of the negative impacts to historic resources that the

relocation of meters, regulators and shut-off valves can create. In order to properly address these issues, and allow adequate flexibility to the proposed regulation where Historic Resources are concerned, we suggest the following changes be made to the amendment:

1. PROVIDE A DEFINITION OF THE TERM “HISTORIC RESOURCES”:

The Amendment does not clearly define which types of Historic Resources qualify for inside meter locations. In order to address this issue, we recommend applying the exception to Local Historic Districts, as well as to any other Resource designated as locally significant as noted below:

- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing resource in a Nationally Registered Historic District;
- Deemed to be “eligible” for the National Register of Historic Places, with the proper documentation;
- Included as a “contributing” resource in a Local Historic District, as recognized by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); and
- Designated locally significant by the local municipality.

2. ADDRESS THE VISUAL IMPACTS OF OUTDOOR GAS SERVICE EQUIPMENT:

Installing a regulator, meter(s), and shut-off valve(s), on any portion of a façade of a Historic Resource that is visible from the public right-of-way negatively impacts the historic character of that building, and may also destroy original historic fabric, and/or alter character defining features as defined by the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties”.

Although the Amendment allows Gas Service Equipment to be maintained inside a building in some cases, it does not require that alternatives be considered to minimize the impact of installing the gas service equipment outside. The Township suggests adoption of the following mitigation measures:

- Installing the equipment in a discreet location such as on the side or rear of a building; and
- Screening the equipment from view with vegetation or other physical screens such as a wood fence or other historically appropriate materials.

3. IMPROVE PROPERTY OWNER AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND NOTIFICATION:

The Amendment should specify a process for the notification of property owners regarding a proposed relocation of Gas Service Equipment that provides adequate information related to the equipment and proposed new location and sufficient time to participate with the local utility company to make informed decisions about where the meter is to be relocated.

Lower Merion Township strongly urges the PUC to further revise the proposed Amendment to take into consideration impacts to all types of Historic Resources and how those impacts can be best mitigated. The character and quality of life in communities such as ours and throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as accorded by Article 1, Section 27 of the State Constitution, would be eroded by the proposed should it be left unchanged from its current form.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions with regard to the comments provided herein, or if we can provide additional assistance with regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Kalner, AIA, LEED AP
Chairman
Historic Architectural Review Board

Christian Busch, AAIA
Chairman
Lower Merion Township Historical Commission