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IRRC

411 N. 9th Street
Allentown, PA 18102

July 14, 2012

2950

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Ms. Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street, 2nd Floor – 1 North
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: **Docket Number:** L-2009-2107155; **Regulation Number:** 57-277 Meter Location; **IRRC Number:** 2950

Dear Ms. Chiavetta,

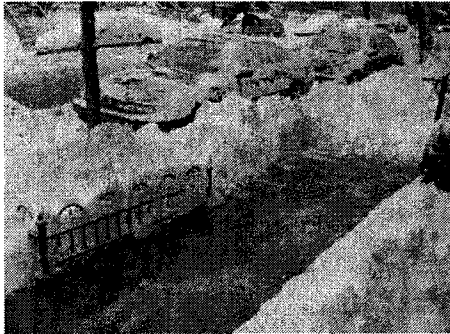
I am writing to express my objection to the placement of gas meters and/or regulators in the front of homes in historic preservation locations and urban locations where home fronts are closely located to sidewalks and streets. I have been a home owner in the Old Allentown Historic District for the past eight years. When house hunting, I was drawn to my property because of the historic charm, the façade restoration, the interior possibility, and the affordability of city living. Since my purchase, I have invested a lot of man hours and funds renovating and remodeling the interior and exterior of my home.

I am extremely concerned about the proposed placement of gas meters and/or regulators in the front of our properties in the City of Allentown, particularly in the Old Allentown Historic District and other Downtown Allentown locations. Below I will address each of my concerns.

1. **Proximity of home front to the street and sidewalk** – I am frequently reading our local media about vehicular accidents in Allentown in which vehicles have crashed into properties. In fact, I just read of another as recent as July 6, 2012, a few blocks away, in which a pick-up truck smashed into a home front. My home does not have a front porch and is located just feet away from the curb. Considering that I live on a busy, two lane one-way street, it is very concerning that a gas meter and/or regulator could be located so close to the street without any sort of barrier protecting it from possible vehicular accidents. Additionally, pedestrian traffic is literally feet away from my door. Without a buffer of a front porch, pedestrian traffic in my urban setting can potentially be a hazard to a gas meter and/or regulator in the front of my home and vice versa. What will prevent passersby from sitting on, standing on, and/or striking a gas meter/regulator? Furthermore, the location of a potential gas meter/regulator could cause a tripping hazard for owners, pedestrians, etc. The pictures below show the proximity of my home to the street and sidewalk (typical of many Old Allentown and other Downtown Allentown homes).



2. **Vandalism** – Living in Downtown Allentown, I have had to endure numerous acts of irrational vandalism/theft. I live in an urban environment in which there seems to be a lack of respect for the property (and well-being) of others and with the proximity to the sidewalk/street, our homes are at constant risk for random acts of senseless vandalism. A gas meter and/or regulator located on the front of my home would be an easy target for someone looking to vandalize a property; the impact of their vandalism could be swift and great. Just by the mere fact that this contraption would be so close to foot traffic would make it an attention-grabbing object for a vandal. Hence, there would be a constant worry for the safety of myself and my dog, those who visit my home, and my neighbors.
3. **Snow** – City regulations prohibit shoveling of snow into the street. The lack of space between many Downtown Allentown homes and the curb leaves very little space to place any shoveled snow. Therefore, as you can see in the pictures below, snow is piled up between the curb and sidewalk and then between the sidewalk and against my home. If there is an outside gas meter and/or regulator on the front of my home, snow would be up against it, possibly covering it, and I'm concerned about the ramifications of this. The pictures below depict a typical snowfall in Allentown, Pennsylvania.



4. **Home and Block Aesthetics** – Finally, I strongly feel that a gas meter and/or regulator located on the façade of my property will be extremely visually unpleasing and downright ugly. I have spent a great deal of time and funds on maintaining, restoring, and renovating my historic property and the thought of damaging my home for this equipment makes me nauseous. Furthermore, the placement of these units on each façade on every block certainly negatively impacts the appearance of the entire block. This is seen in many parts of Allentown where this work has already been done. No thought was put into the location and placement of these units. It is a disgrace.
5. **Street Aesthetics** - Revitalization efforts in Downtown Allentown are going strong, however, the work that is being done in parts of the city to add these gas meters and regulators are making our city look horrendous. Roadways are being torn up every few feet to add this equipment to homes. The patch work of these street holes is awful! Because of this initiative, the city is left with blocks of torn up, bumpy (virtually un-drivable) streets and torn up sidewalks and patch jobs.

Over the course of the past few years, I have attended community meetings with UGI and the PUC regarding this issue. At one meeting, it was unbelievable to hear numerous property owner accounts of how this work was done on their homes, yards dug up, and sidewalks torn apart, without their consent. Sub-contractors blocked off streets in the morning and began working on their properties immediately. Property owners shared how they were not consulted about the most appropriate placement of these units and a number reported property problems following installation.

At another meeting, I recall community members bringing numerous options to UGI and the PUC for alternatives to the proposed outside gas meters and regulators for Allentown, PA. Residents researched these options and found them to be used in other locations throughout the country in high vandalism areas, architecturally sensitive areas, and to promote city aesthetics. These options were shown to be cost effective viable alternatives.

I was a part of a group of residents who toured Allentown on foot with UGI representatives and Allentown City officials. During this walking tour, we visited properties on 7th Street and the surrounding area in which these units were installed. At this time, the group of touring residents discussed concerns about the meter/regulator placement; we observed units placed in hazardous places, poor sidewalk/property patchwork, the unattractive sight of a street lined with these units, and units that were placed where future property renovations could not be completed because of the placement.

It is my hope that the PUC will appropriately and specifically address the unique safety and aesthetic concerns brought forth by folks in historic and urban areas in regard to outside placement of gas meters and/or regulators.

Sincerely,
Dr. Susan N. Fuller