

STATE OF TENNESSEE

Office of the Attorney General



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VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

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Butler Snow LLP
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Nashville, TN 37201

Floyd R. Self, Esq.
Berger Singerman LLP
313 North Monroe Street, Suite 301
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Re: Tennessee Public Utility Commission, Docket No. 20-00047, *Emergency Petition to Suspend Service Disconnections*

Dear Mr. Luna and Mr. Self:

The Consumer Advocate Unit in the Financial Division of the Office of the Tennessee Attorney General (Consumer Advocate) continues to monitor the responses to the Tennessee Public Utility Commission's (TPUC) requests for information by regulated public utilities, including those of Chattanooga Gas Company, Inc. (CGC). On May 29, 2020, CGC submitted a weekly filing.

The Consumer Advocate appreciates CGC's recognition "that its customers who have been adversely impacted by this health emergency and who have been unable to pay their natural gas bills probably have more important issues to deal with than when or how they may pay their natural gas bills."¹ CGC notes that the transition to the "new normal" will not be quick or at the same pace for all of its customers, and therefore, it addressed 4 areas of action: (1) Service Disconnections for Nonpayment; (2) Alternative Payment Plan Program; (3) Late Fees; and (4) Non-Participation Disconnects.

After review of CGC's recent weekly report, the Consumer Advocate has the following comments and/or questions:

- (1) **Service Disconnections.** CGC is committed to "not terminating customers for nonpayment of services for 30 additional days following the termination of the state of emergency declaration."² However, in its *Order Requiring All Jurisdictional Utilities to Suspend Actions to Disconnect Service for Lack of Payment During the State of Public Health Emergency*, the Commission stated that "this order shall continue in effect, at a minimum, until the public health emergency declared on March 12, 2020 expires or is terminated by Governor Lee; at which time the Commission shall consider whether further action is warranted."³ Is its CGC's position that it need not wait for the Commission's consideration of further action after the termination/expiration of the emergency declaration before CGC discontinues its suspension of service disconnections?
- (2) **Alternative Payment Plan (APP) Program.** CGC states that "residential and commercial customers will be asked to make some form of a down payment and also elect a repayment schedule for past due amounts that will be based on financial ability and the period of time for the nonpayment."⁴ The Consumer Advocate is requesting additional details on the APP Program such as the following:
 - a. Define the parameters or options for a down payment.
 - b. Define the minimum and maximum time periods by which CGC will offer terms under the APP Program.
 - c. Define how CGC will determine a customer's financial ability to pay.
 - d. Explain how CGC will ensure that similarly situated customers will be treated the same under the APP Program.
- (3) **Customer Deposits.** Does CGC intend to require disconnected customer to pay a deposit in those situations where their prior deposit had been applied to past due balances?

The Consumer Advocate requests that CGC files its responses with the Commission in this Docket. However, if you believe that any supplemental information to be provided by CGC should be treated confidentially, the Consumer Advocate is open to discussing the treatment of such information. The Consumer Advocate appreciates your time and attention to this inquiry. I hope that you remain well.

Sincerely,



Karen H. Stachowski
Assistant Attorney General

cc: TPUC Docket No. 20-00047
Kelly Cashman Grams, TPUC
David Foster, TPUC

¹ Chattanooga Gas Company COVID-19 Response Update Week of May 25, 2020, p. 2, ¶4 (May 29, 2020).

Letter to Chattanooga Gas Company
TPUC Docket No. 20-00047
June 4, 2020

² *Id.* at p. 3, ¶5.a.

³ *Order Requiring All Jurisdictional Utilities to Suspend Actions to Disconnect Service for Lack of Payment During the State of Public Health Emergency* at 11, Tennessee Public Utility Commission (March 31, 2020) (emphasis added).

⁴ Chattanooga Gas Company COVID-19 Response Update Week of May 25, 2020, p. 3, ¶5.b. (May 29, 2020).