
Formal Complaint of John Kevin Parsons against Dominion Energy Utah	<u>DOCKET NO. 21-057-03</u>
	<u>ORDER</u>

ISSUED: May 11, 2021

1. Background

On March 1, 2021, John Kevin Parsons (“Complainant”) filed a formal complaint (“Complaint”) with the Public Service Commission (PSC) against Questar Gas Company dba Dominion Energy Utah (DEU) related to the placement of the gas meter for Complainant’s new residence. The Complaint and attached materials, including drawings of the new build, email exchanges with DEU, and photographs of the site and neighboring properties, allege that Complainant and DEU disagree on the location of the meter placement. Complainant’s preferred location is along the side of the home whereas DEU’s preferred location is at the front of the home. Complainant alleges that DEU’s preferred location is a personal preference, and not based on applicable DEU policies and regulations. Complainant also alleges that his preferred location does not violate any of DEU’s policies or regulations.

On March 31, 2021, DEU filed its response to the Complaint, with attached materials, including a service line agreement, photographs of Complainant’s residence, drawings, and DEU’s Designing Distribution Meter guidelines (“Design Guidelines”). DEU states that Complainant’s residence is located on a steep hillside in a heavy snowfall area. Consequently, DEU states its preferred location is more accessible for maintenance and in case of an emergency, and that it will protect the meter from accumulating excessive snow and ice. DEU asserts that it considered Complainant’s requested area and deemed it to be unsafe due to its

location,¹ and because it is largely unprotected from snow, noting that the roof is two stories up and has an inadequate overhang to offer adequate protection. In addition, DEU states that Complainant's requested location would be difficult to access. DEU attached several photographs to demonstrate its concerns. DEU indicates it evaluated two other alternate locations but determined both were unacceptable due to space and inaccessibility concerns. DEU concludes that after evaluating several locations, the best location for the meter would be under the exterior staircase on the front of the home, and attached a photograph so demonstrating.

On April 12, 2021, Complainant filed its reply to DEU's response. Complainant replies that after paying his original invoice from DEU, he received a second invoice for an additional amount of approximately \$414.00 and is unsure why he owes the additional amount. He then states that his requested location is also accessible for both maintenance and in case of an emergency, and is also protected from snow and ice. Complainant states that none of his neighbors' meters are protected from snow – contrary to DEU's snow protection Design Guidelines. Complainant also asserts that all of the meters at his neighbor's homes are located on the side of the home opposite the garage "regardless of terrain." In conclusion, Complainant asserts that the requested location is accessible and clear for maintenance and that his residence was the only one for which DEU considered snowfall as a factor in the meter placement decision.

On April 14, 2021, the PSC requested additional information from the parties including additional detail to support the second invoice for the amount of approximately \$414.00 charged

¹ Complainant's residence is located at the top and along the side of a steep slope, and at the bottom of another slope where the side of the home sits. *See* Complainant's Response to the Information Requests, photographs 1 and 7.

to Complainant as well as additional photographs of Complainant's home to better analyze the parties' positions.

2. Discussion

The PSC has carefully reviewed all of the information provided by the parties, including the applicable Design Guidelines, tariffs, all of the submitted photographs and communications between the parties, as well as the renderings of the home and the alternative meter placement locations proposed by Complainant and DEU.

The PSC acknowledges that Section 8.5 of the Design Guidelines states the typical location for meter installations is along the side of the structure opposite of the garage or driveway, and that this is the location Complainant requests the meter be located. However, the Design Guidelines also list Heber among the heavy snowfall areas in the state, and include guidance for meter installation in these areas that focus on maintaining safety and accessibility for DEU's employees.

The PSC requested additional information from the parties and appreciates their submissions including additional photographs that were submitted by Complainant. The photos demonstrate a steep drop-off near Complainant's requested location that, when covered with snow, could pose a safety risk to DEU employees if they were to need access. The PSC acknowledges Complainant's belief that, at least this year, snow accumulation did not seem to be a problem. However, this may not reflect snow accumulation conditions in the future. Complainant's argument that none of his neighbors' homes have meters that were placed in the front of their homes, and that they also live in the same heavy snow area, is not persuasive. This

case is not about the neighboring homes' meter placement location. We do not have any facts concerning the meter placement decisions related to the neighbors' homes other than what Complainant submitted. We do not know, for example, what other considerations DEU took into account in those instances. And examples provided by the Complainant of neighboring homes do not have the same steep grade as the drop-off that exists in front of Complainant's property.

Based on all of the evidence submitted and given Complainant's request for prompt resolution so as not to delay continued construction of the residence, the PSC concludes that, as to the meter placement, DEU's decision regarding the location thereof is not unreasonable. DEU is in the best position to gauge the optimal locations for its meters considering safety and accessibility factors, in particular in a snow-heavy area. DEU's consideration of these factors is consistent with the Design Guidelines for a snow-heavy area. While typical guidelines would allow the meter to be placed in Complainant's requested location, the residence is located near the top of the mountain in an already snow-heavy area with a steep drop-off in the front yard.² The photographs show that the residence sits above the elevation of the street. As to the second invoice, the PSC examined the details presented by DEU concerning the additional amount of approximately \$414.00 charged to Complainant and deems the charges to be based on actual costs. However, the PSC directs DEU, in the future, to be more transparent about the reason for increasing a customer's costs.

² See Dominion Energy Utah's Written Response to Complaint, Exhibit B, at 1 (illustrating the location of Complainant's residence, which is "[l]ocated on the top of Interlaken Mtn.>").

3. Order

For the reasons explained above, DEU may direct Complainant to place the meter at DEU's required location to ensure safety and accessibility. In addition, the additional amount of approximately \$414 related to the meter placement work at Complainant's location reflects actual costs incurred, and is therefore consistent with DEU's policies and tariff.

DATED at Salt Lake City, Utah, May 11, 2021.

/s/ Yvonne R. Hogle
Presiding Officer

Approved and Confirmed May 11, 2021, as the Order of the Public Service
Commission of Utah.

/s/ Thad LeVar, Chair

/s/ David R. Clark, Commissioner

/s/ Ron Allen, Commissioner

Attest:

/s/ Gary L. Widerburg
PSC Secretary
DW#318649

Notice of Opportunity for Agency Review or Rehearing

Pursuant to Utah Code Ann. §§ 63G-4-301 and 54-7-15, a party may seek agency review or rehearing of this order by filing a request for review or rehearing with the PSC within 30 days after the issuance of the order. Responses to a request for agency review or rehearing must be filed within 15 days of the filing of the request for review or rehearing. If the PSC fails to grant a request for review or rehearing within 30 days after the filing of a request for review or rehearing, it is deemed denied. Judicial review of the PSC's final agency action may be obtained by filing a Petition for Review with the Utah Supreme Court within 30 days after final agency action. Any Petition for Review must comply with the requirements of Utah Code Ann. §§ 63G-4-401, 63G-4-403, and the Utah Rules of Appellate Procedure.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I CERTIFY that on May 11, 2021, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was delivered upon the following as indicated below:

By Email:

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