



GPSC News

Volume 6 Issue 1

Winter 2007

Fuel Case Proceedings

*January 23 hearings
 *February 6 decision
 *Request reduced \$44 million

Commission Decides Georgia Power Fuel Case



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The Commission February 6 approved new rates for Georgia Power Company to allow the utility to pay for forecasted fuel prices for the year beginning March 1, 2007 as well as recover fuel costs that have been under collected since approval of fuel rates in the

past year.

The Commission approved a stipulation with the Company that reduces the Company's request by \$44 million. The Commission decision means the average monthly bill for a residential consumer using 1,000 kilowatt hours will increase by \$5.00.

The Company's original request would have resulted in an increase of \$5.50 per month. The Company's filing sought an increase in fuel costs of \$416 million. Georgia law allows electric utilities to recover their fuel costs on a dollar for dollar basis.

Commission Moves Ahead on Speir Proposed Ex Parte Rule

Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir is renewing her proposal that the Commission adopt a policy requiring that the Commission hearing process be transparent and prohibiting *ex parte* communications. The Commission March 6 issued a formal Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NOPR) so that the Commission may receive



comments on this proposal. An *ex parte* communication is a commu-

nication by one party with a Commissioner about a case without the other parties to the case having the opportunity to respond and without members of the public being able to know what was said.

"Commission decisions should be made based on the evidence in the re-

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2007 Legislature in Full Swing

The 2007 Georgia General Assembly is in full swing with the budget as usual topping the list of key issues. The Commission has presented both its Fiscal Year 2008 and its Amended 2007 Budget requests to both the House and Senate budget committees. However, lawmakers have slowed down their push on the budgets while they sort out the funding shortfall for the Peach Care Health Insurance program.

In the meantime, the Commission has had two bills relating to its transportation functions introduced in the House. House Bill 316, sponsored by Representative David Ralston of Blue

Ridge, would bring nonconsensual towers operating only inside the city limits under Commission jurisdiction.

House Bill 317, also sponsored by Representative Ralston, would bring household goods movers operating solely inside city limits under Commission jurisdiction. The Commission hopes to get a handle on illegal movers who are overcharging consumers and operating with no insurance.

Both of these measures passed the House on February 28 by a combined total of 320-0. The bills have been assigned to the Senate

If you have a story for the next GPSC News, please send to Bill Edge, bille@psc.state.ga.us. Next issue deadline is April 16, 2007.

State and Local Government Operations Committee. Senator John Wiles chairs this committee.

Another bill, though not an official Commission bill, would allow the Commission to have the telephone service of illegal movers disconnected. House Bill 460 is sponsored by Representative Carl Rogers of Gainesville.

House Bill 522, sponsored by Representative Jeff Lewis, would allow a marketer to opt out of the allocation of AGL capacity assets upon a showing that the marketer has sufficient capacity to serve its customers. The bill is now in House Rules.

Commission Fines Towing Company

The Commission February 23 fined Silent Night Towing Recovery and Transport, Inc. (Silent Night) of Conley, Georgia \$10,000 in civil penalties and ordered them to pay restitution to consumers in the amount of \$8,475.

The Commission approved a consent agreement signed by Silent Night and Commission staff. The Commission's investigation found that Silent Night

had violated state law and Commission rules, including providing false business addresses, improper signage, failing to file proof of proper insurance with the Commission and exceeding the maximum rate tariff approved by the Commission. Silent Night has 90 days to pay the civil penalty to the Commission.

The Commission held a hearing on these complaints on June 28, 2006.

Silent Night does not currently possess the required Commission permit necessary to tow trespassing vehicles without the owners' consent, nor does the company have other state government permits for conducting consensual towing.



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cord," Speir said, "not based on back-room deals or 'off the record' conversation."

In her motion Commissioner Speir said, "Last year, I made a motion that the Commission adopt an ex parte rule. The motion deadlocked 2 to 2, with 1 abstention. Given the important cases coming up this year, it is time to try again.

Over the course of this coming year, the Commission will be deciding cases that will be critical to meeting the future energy needs of the people of Georgia, including a rate case and an Integrated Resource Plan for Georgia Power and a capacity supply plan for Atlanta Gas Light Company. These decisions will be worth literally billions of dollars to Georgia ratepayers.

If conversations take place outside of the hearing process which excludes any of the parties, then the public hearing process is undermined and the public's confidence in the fairness of the Commission's decisions is also undermined.

The proposed rule would assure the public and the parties that the Commission's process

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Commissioner Wise Begins Third Term



Commissioner Stan Wise took the oath of office December 18 to begin his third six-year term on the Commission. Governor Sonny Perdue administered the oath of office to Wise as his wife Denise held the Bible. Wise won re-election in November to his third term on the Commission with 55 percent of the vote. He was re-elected to second term in 2000 and elected to his first term in 1994 after serving a four-year term on the Cobb County Commission. He served as Commission Chairman last year and previously in 1997 and 1999. Commissioner Wise is a past president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility



Governor Sonny Perdue administers the oath of office to Commissioner Wise as Denise Wise holds the Bible.

Commissioners (NARUC). He managed an insurance business in Cobb County for over twenty years. He and his wife have two grown children. He is a graduate of the Charleston Southern University.

Commissioner Eaton Takes Office for First Term

Governor Sonny Perdue administered the oath of office to **Commissioner Chuck Eaton**, the Commission's newest member on December 28, 2006. Eaton took the oath as his wife Erika looked on. Eaton won his office in a run-off election on December 6 with 52 percent of the vote. Before serving on the Commission, he worked in real

estate sales. Prior to moving to Atlanta, he was an Account Executive for a packaging manufacturer in LaGrange, Georgia. Commissioner Eaton also has an Accounting degree from the University of Alabama.

(right) Commissioner Eaton Takes Oath as his wife looks on.



Commission Approves Assistance for Low Income Senior Citizens in Paying Natural Gas Bills

The Commission December 19 approved more than \$5 million in one-time grants to senior citizens receiving the low-income senior citizens discount in the Atlanta Gas Light Company (AGLC) delivery area. The Commission approved a \$150 credit that will be applied to the seniors' bills is-

sued in the January and February billing cycles. More than 36,000 natural gas consumers are eligible for this grant which are paid out of the Universal Service Fund (USF), a fund established by the Natural Gas and Competition Act of 1997 to provide for natural

gas pipeline extensions and later amended to include low-income assistance.

Since 2000 the Commission has provided more than \$72 million in refunds, grants and low-income assistance to natural gas customers in Georgia in the AGLC service territory.

Wise Requests Georgia Power to Explore Placing of Telecommunication Facilities on Electric Transmission Structures



Commissioner Stan Wise, requested December 5 that Georgia Power Company investigate the possibility of allowing telecommunications communities to place communications facilities, such as cellular telephone antennas, on the Company's electric transmission facilities.

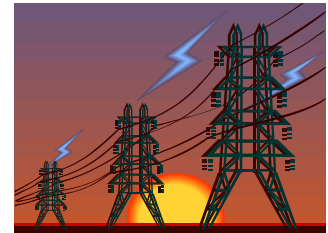
"I have become aware that some utilities are working with communications companies and cell phone carriers to allow them to place their antennas on their existing transmission structures. Surely,



with the growing issues surrounding sighting and building new cell towers, a program like this would have some societal benefits as well as provide revenue that could be used to benefit ratepayers," said Wise. Commissioner Wise is requesting that the Company report

back to the Commission on this request within 45 days.

Commissioner Wise is serving his third term on the Commission. He served as Commission Chairman in 2006, 1999 and 1997. He is also a past President of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC).



Commission Fines City of Monroe

The Commission January 16, 2007 unanimously approved a fine of \$100,000 against the City of Monroe (Monroe) for violations of state law and Commission rules in failing to obtain a certificate of public convenience and necessity before extending its natural gas distribution system outside Walton County. Docket Number 22787-U) The Com-

mission also accepted a staff recommendation, with modifications, and approved Monroe's application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity, Docket Number 22850-U, provided Monroe pays the fine within 75 days of the final date of the order in this docket. The Commission added two amendments to the staff recommendations in this Docket.

The Commission accepted a two-part amendment by Commissioner Doug Everett. The Everett amendment: 1. Accepts the service territory maps as submitted by Atlanta Gas Light Company (AGLC) and; 2. Requires Monroe and AGLC to transfer any natural gas distribution lines the other has constructed in the other's territory within 60 days of the order in

this docket. In addition, certain Monroe customers will be transferred to AGLC within 90 days of the order. Monroe must notify any affected customers within ten days.

The Commission also accepted an amendment by Commissioner Robert Baker to require Monroe to file any request to increase rates or change terms and conditions with the Commission.

The Commission's decision follows extensive investigations and hearings in this docket following a complaint filed against Monroe by Atlanta Gas Light Company.

In other action the Commission approved: A certificate of authority for Utility Resource Solutions, L.P. (URS) to engage in retail sales of natural gas to residential and commercial cus-

tomers within the Atlanta Gas Light (AGLC) delivery area; and a fine of \$60,000 against Mediacom for violations of the Georgia Utility Facilities Protection Act.



PSC Stops Buzz Telecom from Doing Business in Georgia; Launches Formal Investigation

The Commission December 19 suspended Buzz Telecom's certificate, effectively terminating the Company's operation in Georgia. The Commission also launched a formal investigation into charges that Buzz has slammed customers and engaged in other deceptive business practices. Slamming is the illegal switching of a consumers' long distance carrier without permission.

The Commission has received more than 140 complaints 2006 from consumers, many of whom are senior citizens,

regarding Buzz Telecom's business practices.

The Commission will continue its investigation into complaints against the Company and its affiliates, Business Options, Inc., Ultimate Medium Communications Corporation and UMCC Holdings, Inc. The Federal Communications Commission has also cited Buzz for slamming.

Consumers who believe their service has been slammed or have received bills from Buzz Telecom, UMCC or Business Options are advised to do the following:

- Do not pay the bill
 - Contact the PSC to file a slamming or deceptive practices complaint
- Check with their local telephone service provider to verify that their long distance service is being provided by their preferred carrier. If not, ask the local carrier to switch their long distance service to their preferred carrier and place a primary interexchange carrier (PIC) freeze on their phone number to assure that their service cannot be switched without their explicit consent.

PSC Approves "311" Abbreviated Dialing for Non-Emergency Government Services in DeKalb County

The Commission December 19 approved the assignment of the abbreviated dialing code "311" for non-emergency government services in DeKalb County, Georgia.

After years of study and several pilot programs, DeKalb is ready to move forward with 311-dialing to make it easier

for DeKalb citizens to communicate with their government. It will give callers an easily identifiable number to call for non-emergency police, County services and basic County information.

DeKalb's initial petition was filed in August 2004, but the case was held pending an investigation to determine how DeKalb would pro-

vide 311 service without prohibiting adjacent jurisdictions, that share a Central Office, from providing 311 service to their citizens. In September 2006, DeKalb filed an updated petition with a proposed "Call Routing Solution from Shared Central Offices." Under this solution calls from

DeKalb residents will be routed to DeKalb's Citizen Help Center; Non-DeKalb callers will hear a recording advising them of the status of 311-calling in their community.

Commissioner David Burgess, a DeKalb resident, believes that 311-dialing will not only improve non-emergency customer service, but will also improve 911 emergency response times.

Non-emergency calls to 911 prevent a quick response to emergency callers. Implementing 311-dialing will reduce the chance of 911 callers' being put on hold, receiving a busy signal or getting a recorded message. Non-emergency calls make up over 40% of all 911 calls.

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will be open and transparent, that all parties are treated fairly, and that the decisions will be based solely on the evidence in the record rather than on private conversations."

Commissioner Speir was the first woman elected to the Commission in 2002.

Baker Takes Helm as Chair



Commissioner Robert B. Baker, Jr. began January 15 a one-year term as Commission Chairman for 2007. Commissioner Baker previously chaired the Commission in 1994, 1998 and 2003. Commissioner Chuck Eaton will serve as vice-chairman.

Baker has served on the five-member regulatory panel since 1993. He was elected to his first six-year term in November 1992 as the first Republican elected to statewide office since Reconstruction. He won re-election in 1998 and 2004. Commissioner Baker's complete biography is



on the Commission web site, www.psc.state.ga.us.

Chairman Baker also announced the following committee assignments: Commissioner Stan Wise will chair the Telecommunications Committee, Commissioner Angela Speir will chair the Energy Committee and Commissioner Chuck Eaton will chair the Transportation Committee.



PSC Approves Transfer of Commerce Energy Customers to Georgia Natural Gas

The Commission November 7 approved the transfer of Commerce Energy, Inc. (Commerce) natural gas customers to Georgia Natural Gas (GNG).

According to a public filing with the Commission, Commerce currently serves approximately 6,500 retail natural gas customers in Georgia.

On October 11, 2006 Commerce and GNG entered into an Asset Purchase Agreement under which Commerce agreed to transfer nearly all of its customers to GNG.

The Commission approved the transfer subject to the following conditions:

As required by Commission Rule 515-7-3-.04, GNG and

Commerce will jointly send all affected customers a customer notification letter. The notice will be sent 30 days in advance of the transfer to GNG and will advise customers of the date that they will be transferred to GNG, the fact that they will be transferred to GNG, that they have a right to select a marketer of their choice without charge prior to the switch date, and the rates,

terms and conditions of service which GNG will be offering them.

Pursuant to Commission Rule 515-7-3-.04(13) (b), the customers' right to one free annual switch will not be effected by the transfer to GNG. In the event a customer selects another marketer rather than be switched to GNG, GNG will pay to Atlanta Gas Light Company

("AGLC") any applicable switch fee so that the customer maintains its free annual switch. In the event that a customer is switched to GNG and then selects another marketer within the same calendar year and a switching charge is incurred as a result, GNG will pay AGLC any applicable switching fees so that the customer

maintains its annual free switch. GNG will continue to honor Commerce's fixed rate agreements for the length of each agreement. For residential customers on a variable price plan, GNG will honor the Commerce current DDDC charge. Variable rate customers will also be free to switch to any other GNG plan for which they qualify.



Employee News

New Employees



Yolanda Clay joined the Commission December 18 in the Consumer Affairs Section. She came to Georgia in 1993 from Texas. She has previously worked in the banking industry. She is

married and the mother of five girls ranging from ages 3 to 19.



William Peeler (top) joined the Commissioner February 27 in Consumer Affairs as an Information and Referral Specialist.

Former Consumer Chief Views for Florida PSC

Phil Nowicki, former director of consumer Affairs, is in the running for seat on the Florida Public Service Commission. Phil currently works for the Governor's Office of Consumer Affairs.

William has 17+ years of customer service skills, including two years of service in two other state agencies: DHR's Division of Public Health and the Employee Retirement System of Georgia.

Congratulations

Congratulations to **Commissioner Chuck Eaton** and his wife Erika on the birth of their daughter, Lydia Noel Eaton on December 19, 2006. She is the couple's first child.



Commissioner Wise Celebrates Birthday



For the third year, **Commissioner Stan Wise** treated staff to a delicious lunch on his birthday January 19.

Sympathy

We extend our condolences to **Bruce Coogler** on the passing of his mother on October 28, 2006. The funeral was held October 30 at Pritchett Memorial Baptist Church in Meansville, Georgia.



Mobilized

Bill Edge, the Commission's Public Information Officer and Legislative Liaison, will be leaving March 16 for active duty in the military. Bill is a member of the Navy Reserve. He will spend at least six months at Balad Air Base, Iraq. Bill has been with the Commission since November 2000.



New Co-ops

Welcome aboard to two co-op students with the PSC --- Kelly Keegan and Serrano Montagno. Kelly Keegan is returning for her third work term and will be working in the Natural Gas unit.

Serrano Montagno is beginning his first work term and is assigned to the Electric unit. Welcome aboard to all three of our co-ops (Kelly, Serrano, and Kyle Zimmerman -Telecom unit.



Commission News

Georgia State Holidays For 2007

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
Confederate Memorial Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day
Veterans Day
Thanksgiving
Robert E. Lee Birthday
Christmas
President's Day

January 1
January 15
April 23
May 28
July 4
September 3
October 8
November 11
November 22
November 23
December 25
December 24

Commission Calendar



February

1-Committees
 6-Administrative Session
 15-Committees
 20-Administrative Session

March

1-Committees
 6-Administrative Session
 15-Committees
 20-Administrative Session
 29-Committees

Commission Calendar

June 3-6, 2007
 Little Rock, Arkansas

April

3-Administrative Session
 12-Committees
 17-Administrative Session
 26-Committees

May

1-Administrative Session
 10-Committees
 15-Administrative Session
 31-Committees

NARUC

Summer Meeting 2007

July 15-18, 2007
 New York City, New York
Annual Convention 2007
 November 11-14, 2006
 Anaheim, CA

SEARUC

Annual Meeting 2007

GPSC ONLINE:

www.psc.state.ga.us



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