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From the Office of Commissioner Angela Speir NEWS RELEASE

Commission Issued For Comment The Open Hearing Process Rule Proposed By Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir

Atlanta, May 15, 2007 – Today, the Commission voted to issue for comment a modified version of the proposed Open Hearing Process rule proposed by Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir. This proposal would require the Commission hearing process be transparent and restrict *ex parte* communications. An *ex parte* communication is a communication by one party with a Commissioner about a case without the other parties to the case being present or having the opportunity to respond and without members of the public being able to know what was said.

“As I’ve said throughout this process, Commission decisions should be made based on the evidence in the record,” Speir said, “not based on back-room deals or ‘off the record’ conversations.”

“Over the course of this coming year, the Public Service 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 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.”

While the proposed rule applies to all parties to the case before the Commission, several motions were made at today’s meeting that could have also restricted the ability of average citizens from making their views known to Commissioners. All of these motions were defeated. “It is silly to argue that an average residential customer in Georgia who is not a party to a rate case is similarly situated to, for example, the utility filing for the rate increase. That average consumer would not be conveying the type of technical information that the utility reasonably would need to respond to or cross-examine.”

A public hearing on the proposed rule will be held in the first floor hearing room at 244 Washington Street, Atlanta beginning at 10:00 a.m. on June 26, 2007. The meeting is open to the public and public comment. The proposed rule is scheduled to be voted on at the Commission’s July 3, 2007 Administrative Session.

Commissioner Speir is serving her first six-year term on the Commission. In 2002, she became the first woman elected to the Commission and in 2005 was the first woman to serve as Commission Chairman.

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