



GPSC News



Making Business and Safety Decisions Affecting Tomorrow

Volume 5 Issue 2

Fall 2005

*Low-income senior discount increases to \$14 a month
 *Company will file new case in January 2006
 *Fuel Rate will increase \$15 per month

Commission Reaches Agreement on Savannah Electric Fuel Case

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Low-income senior citizens who are customers of Savannah Electric and Power Company (Company) will see an increase in the discount on their electric bills following the Commission approval November 10 of an agreement in Savannah Electric's Fuel Cost Recovery Case. Under the terms of the agreement, low-income senior citizens will receive a \$6.00 fuel charge discount on their monthly bills. Combined with the low-income senior citizen base rate discount, this means low-income senior

citizens would receive a \$20 total credit on their monthly electric bills. The new fuel cost rate means the typical Savannah Electric residential customer using 1200 kilowatt hours per month will see about a 13 percent increase in their total electric bill beginning with the December billing cycle, an increase of \$15 a month. The new rate will allow the Company to collect total estimated fuel costs through November 30, 2006 of approximately \$196 million and to col-

lect an under recovered balance of an estimated \$71.8 million over four years. Other provisions of the agreement include:

- Nearly \$374,000 in costs has been removed from the Company's request.
- The Commission finds no evidence that any of the Company's fuel costs were imprudent or illegal.
- Collection of the

(Continued on page 2)

Commission Approves Funds to Help Consumers Pay Gas Bills

The Commission October 4 approved the disbursement of \$6 million from the Universal Service Fund (USF) to the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to supplement grants from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). DHR administers the LIHEAP program

which is federally funded. Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir says the Commission decision means thousands of Georgia natural gas consumers will receive help in paying the expected the higher than usual natural gas bills this winter. Commissioner Speir

said, "This is an appropriate action for the Commission and an action that will help thousands of Georgians. The effects of Hurricane Katrina and the rising demand for natural gas mean many consumers are facing natural gas bills more than 70 per-

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Commissioners Testify Before Joint Legislative Study Committee

Commissioners testified August 10 before the Joint Emerging Technologies Study Committee meeting at the Capitol. The Legislature created the Study Committee by Senate Resolution 298 to examine new telecommunications technologies and the Commission role in their deployment and development.

Commission Chair Angela Speir, Commissioners David Burgess and Robert Baker told the legislators that the Commission has no desire to regulate rates and pricing of internet, broadband or Voice over Internet Protocol technologies. However the Commission



Commissioners Speir, Burgess and Baker testify at Joint Committee Hearing

If you have a story for the next GPSC News, please send to Bill Edge, billie@psc.state.ga.us. Next issue deadline is January 15, 2006.

believes it should retain some control over consumer and quality of service issues. BellSouth presented their side of the issue, asserting that legislation is needed to reduce regulatory uncertainty in

Georgia.

The Joint Study Committee will issue its final report in December and is expected to recommend legislation for the upcoming 2006 legislative session.

Savannah Electric Fuel Case

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under recovered balance of \$71.8 million will take place over a four year period.

The Company will file a new fuel cost recovery request by January 17, 2006 to recover costs due to the increase in natural gas prices.

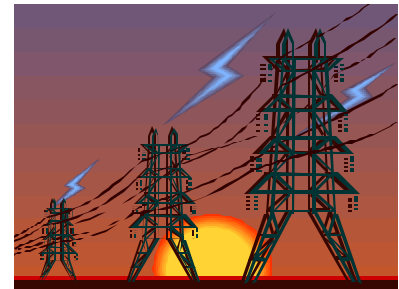
Commission Chair Angela Speir directed the Company to include a proposal for a dis-

count for the low-income disabled in their next fuel case filing.

Commissioner David Burgess added that it is time to consider a possible merger of Savannah Electric and Georgia Power as one means to reduce the impact on Savannah Electric customers of recent hikes in the price of fuel.

The Company filed this request to increase its fuel rates on August 19, 2005. The Commission held a hearing in Savannah on

the Company's request on October 24, 2005 at the Chatham County Commission offices.



Commission Approves Low Income Assistance

(Continued from page 1)

cent higher than last year." Commissioner Speir is serving as the Commission Chairman this year. In 2002, she became the first woman elected to the Commission and is the first woman to serve as Chairman.

Wise Meets with FCC

Commissioner Stan Wise met with the Federal Communications Commission September 15 in Atlanta. The FCC conducted a listening session in Atlanta to listen to telecommunications companies and experts report on efforts to repair damage by Hurricane



Katrina. The FCC is concerned about the failure of emergency communications in the aftermath of the hurricane.



Commission Takes Hearings on the Road

The Commission headed east, south and north during September, October and November to hold hearings in the Atmos Energy base rate case and the Savannah Electric fuel cost rate cases. Commissioners held two days of hearings September 7 and 8 in Columbus to kick off the hearings on Atmos Energy's request for an increase in its base rates. The hearings were held at the Elizabeth Bradley Turner Center at Columbus State University. The local news media, Columbus Ledger Enquirer, WRBL-TV and WTVM-TV also covered the hearings.



Commissioners hear Atmos Rate Case at Brenau University in Gainesville

The Commission continued the hearings in Gainesville on November 3 at Brenau University's John S. Burd Center for

the Performing Arts. The Gainesville Times and WDUN Radio attended. State Representative Carl Rogers spoke to the Commission and voiced his opposition to the rate increase.

On October 24, the Commission held a hearing in Savannah on the Savannah Electric request for an increase in the fuel cost recovery rate. The Commission again used the Chatham County Commission chambers at the Old County Courthouse Building. The local media also covered this hearing, including the Savannah Morning News, WSAV-TV and WTOC-TV.



Columbus television stations interview **Commissioner Stan Wise** at Columbus State University during the Atmos Energy hearing.



Reporter JoAnn Merrigan of WSAV-TV in Savannah interviews **Commissioner Angela Speir** during a break in the Savannah Electric hearing.



Reporter JoAnn Merrigan interviews **Commissioner David Burgess** following the Savannah Electric hearing.

Commission Decides Atmos Rate Case

The Commission November 17 by a 3-2 vote approved a \$3.8 million cut in the Atmos Energy Company (Company) request to increase its base rates. The Commission decision means the average Atmos residential customer will see a small increase in their monthly bill of

about \$.32. The Company will receive an annual increase in base revenues of \$345,505. The Company's request, filed on May 20, 2005, asked for an annual increase in base revenues of \$4.022 million (later revised to a \$4.189 million increase) which the Company said would

have increased the average residential bill by about \$4.52 a month.

Commissioner Doug Everett said of the Commission's decision, "This vote decreases the Company's profit making ability by lowering their Return on Equity to

(Continued on page 5)

Commission Approves Measures to Assist Hurricane Evacuees



The Commission September 20 approved two measures to assist Hurricane Katrina evacuees in Georgia to establish telephone service and receive low-income discounts under the Lifeline Assistance and Link-Up Georgia programs.

The first measure allows BellSouth to waive all installation charges for a 90-day period for evacuees of Hurricane Katrina who have settled in Georgia and want to establish telephone service.

The second measure amends the eligibility requirements for the Lifeline Assistance and the

Link-Up program to include evacuees from the Gulf Region who received or are receiving assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. Lifeline Assistance provides up to a \$13.50 credit (a federal credit of \$10 and an additional credit of \$3.50 from BellSouth) on qualified residential customers' bills in BellSouth's service area.

Customers in other telephone companies' service areas receive the \$10 federal credit. Link-Up Georgia reduces the

cost of having a telephone installed. They are eligible to receive one-half of the connection charge or \$30, whichever is lesser, off the cost of having a telephone installed. However, BellSouth credits 100% of the connection charges for its eligible Link-Up customers.



Detariffing Measures Gets Commission Nod

The Commission October 19 unanimously approved a stipulation between its Staff and BellSouth Telecommunications, Incorporated (BellSouth) that provides for the "detariffing" of certain products and services, subject to a number of terms and conditions that ensure continued consumer protection. No party to the proceeding opposed the

stipulation. The decision means BellSouth is no longer required to file and maintain tariffs or promotions for new and most existing retail services, bundles, contracts, and contract service arrangements with the Commission. Previously, BellSouth had been required to file a tariff with the PSC detailing its pricing and promotion changes as well as product

launches and terms and conditions 30 days before they went into effect. Detariffing will remove this requirement from BellSouth. Presently, the tariffs contain the rates, terms and conditions of services provided by the Company. BellSouth says the company will continue to notify customers of any changes and post them on their website at

www.bellsouth.com. BellSouth will notify the Commission Staff and the Consumers' Utility Counsel of any changes to the prices, terms or conditions of its detariffed services. In addition, the Commission will maintain its authority to resolve customers' complaints related to the detariffed services.



Commissioner David Burgess noted, "The Commission recognizes the changes in the telecommunications

industry. I hope this decision will allow BellSouth to better

respond to competition and will allow consumers to benefit from better services and reductions in prices." The Commission has the authority to detariff these services under state law found at O.C.G.A. §46-2-23. The Commission decision follows a hearing held on this issue on August 11, 2005.

Commission Approves Economic Assistance for Savannah Project



The Commission September 6 approved nearly \$400,000 in economic assistance for a major economic development in the Savannah area. The funds will be distributed from the Universal Service Fund (USF), a fund established by the Natural Gas Competition and Deregulation Act of 1997. The law allows the Commission to use the USF to provide funding for the extension of natural gas lines into unserved areas in the Atlanta Gas Light Company service area. The project will extend an

AGLC natural gas main more than 2,500 feet under the Savannah River from the mainland to Hutchinson Island. The developer says 161 residential units will be developed initially. **Commissioner David Burgess** who made the motion in support of the funding, said, "This project is a great opportunity for the Commission to do something in the Savannah community." **Commissioner Burgess** says there are plans to tie an already existing hotel on the island into the pipeline as well as additional contemplated commercial, industrial and residential con-

struction.

The Commission's action requires the developer, Savannah Harbor, to contribute \$100,000 to the project in order to receive the additional funding of \$396,541. Burgess's motion also requires the Company to track the number of units served by the pipeline and make refunds to the USF. Burgess says he believes it is possible the Company will eventually repay the entire amount of the funding back to the USF.

Commissioner Stan Wise, who joined Commissioner Bur-



gess and **Commissioner Doug Everett** in voting for the USF disbursement said, "This is an opportunity to jump start economic growth in Savannah."

The Commission voted 3-2 to support the disbursement.

Commission Names New Telecommunications Relay Service Provider



The Commission September 20 approved the selection of Hamilton Telephone Company as the new provider for the Georgia Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) effective April 1, 2006. Georgia law requires the Commis-

sion to administer the TRS system which provides telecommunications services for those with hearing and speech disabilities. After consideration of three competing bids, the Commission awarded the TRS contract to Hamilton, an Aurora, Nebraska telecommunications company.

Atmos Rate Decision

(Continued from page 3)

10.125 percent from the current 11.5 percent. This reduction alone decreases the Company's base revenues by more than \$636,000 a year saving ratepayers an additional cost on their monthly bills."

The Commission also adopted

a motion by **Commissioner Angela Speir** that the Company establish a program whereby Atmos' Georgia ratepayers are provided with the option on their monthly bills to check a box that indicates that the ratepayer wishes to contribute an additional dollar (\$1.00) per month over and above their billed amount. These funds would be distrib-

uted to low income senior ratepayers to assist with the payment of their natural gas bills. The motion requires the Company to file the details of this program with the Commission by December 12, 2005.

The Commission decision on the Atmos request follows a six-month hearing process.

Commission Team Runs in Kaiser Permanente Corporate Run



For the fifth consecutive year, the PSC Regulators took part in the annual Kaiser Permanente Corporate Challenge this year on September 15. **John Kaduk** gets a special thanks for leading the PSC team this year. Race participants say the tent, food and fellowship this year were great.

We would also like to thank **Monique Pringle** (and her lovely little assistant) and **Sallie Kempton** for pumping up the team before and after the race and **Commissioner Stan Wise** for providing the team T-shirts.

Bolin Killings led the Regulators and was the first one back to the tent. The annual event benefits



The Regulators pose for a pre-race photo before heading down to Turner Field.

charity and draws thousands of employees of metro Atlanta businesses and government organizations.

The Regulators taking part included: **James Gibson, Sallie Kempton, Monique Pringle, Patrick Reinhartdt, Bolin Killings, John Kaduk, Janey Chavet, Sheree Kernizan, Michelle Thebert, Victoria Taylor, DeLancey Todd, Ann McCulloug, Julia Truss, Tonika Starkes, O'tania Jenkins and Veronica Thomas.**

Race participants enjoy food and fellowship at the Commission tent at the Turner Field race site.



Commissioner Everett Named to Agrirama Authority

Commissioner **Doug Everett** has been named to the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority which is headquartered in Tifton, Georgia. Everett has served on the Commission since January 1, 2003.



Previously he served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1997-2003. Prior to serving as a legislator, Everett served on the Albany Zoning and Planning Board of

Appeals, the Board of Tax Assessors and three terms on the Albany City Commission, including two years as Mayor Pro Tem. Everett earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Georgia Southern University.



Employee News

Retirements

Carol Metz retired October 31 following ten years service at the Commission in the Personnel Office. Carol says she plans to spend more time with her children and her grandchildren.

Friends, family and co-workers gave Carol a send off here at the Commission. The Commission presented her with a plaque for her service and her colleagues presented her with a cash gift of \$363 as well as other gifts to bid her farewell.



Commissioners Angela Speir and Robert Baker present **Carol** with a plaque honoring her service at the Commission.



Co-workers, friends and family enjoy the goodies at Carol's retirement celebration

New Employees



John Tucker joined the Commission October 3 as a Staff Attorney and Hearing Officer. John has previously served as a hearing officer at the Commission.



Clare McGuire joined the Commission November 16 as a Staff Attorney. Prior to the Commission, Clare was an attorney with the Consumers' Utility Counsel.

Pipeline Folks Serve at Locate Rodeo

Pipeline Safety employees **Gary Mason, Rob Pace, Bruce Coogler and Jason Smith** served as volunteers at the August 6 Locate Rodeo in Atlanta. The Rodeo includes locates for water/sewer, gas, electric and communication facilities.



Sympathy

Our sympathies go to **Nancy Tyer** on the death of her brother-in-law, Preston Tyer, who passed away October 29. He was only 51 years old and his death was unexpected.

Our condolences go to **Danny McGriff** on the death of his father, Jeff McGriff, on October 8. The funeral was held in Stockbridge on October 11.

Our sympathy goes to **John Kaduk** on the passing August 8

of his grandfather, Louis Kaduk, of Smithtown, West Virginia.

Our sympathy goes to former employee **Terri Lyndall** on the passing of her father on October 8 and the recent death of her ex-husband Mike Lyndall.



Concerns

We continue to wish a speedy recovery to **Bruce Coogler** following his stroke September 13.

We continue to pray for **Ruby Robinson** as she battles cancer.

We rejoice at **Dan Cearfoss'** successful surgery in September and at **Joyce Lewis'** recovery from pneumonia.

Commission News



Georgia State Holidays For 2005

New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday	January 17
Confederate Memorial Day	April 25
Memorial Day	May 30
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	September 5
Columbus Day	October 10
Veterans Day	November 11
Thanksgiving	November 24
Robert E. Lee Birthday	November 25
Christmas	December 26
President's Day	December 27

Commission Calendar



November	17- Administrative Session 24-25- Holiday
December	1- Committees 6- Administrative Session 15- Committees 20- Administrative Session 26-26- Holiday 29- Committees
January 2006	2- Holiday 3- Administrative Session

Commission Calendar

12- Committees
16- Holiday
17-Administrative Session
February
2- Committees
7-Administrative Session
16- Committees
21-Administrative Session
March
2- Committees
7-Administrative Session
16- Committees

NARUC
Annual Convention
November 13-16, 2005
Palm Springs, CA

Winter Meeting 2006
February 12-15, 2006
Washington, D.C.

Summer Meeting 2006
July 30- August 2, 2006
San Francisco, CA

SEARUC

June 5-7, 2006
Gulfport, Miss.

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COMMISSIONERS
Angela E. Speir, Chairman
Robert B. Baker, Jr.
David L. Burgess
H. Doug Everett
Stan Wise

