



GPSC News



Making Business and Safety Decisions Affecting Tomorrow

Volume 4 Issue 4

Spring 2005

Atlanta Gas Light Rate Case
 *Limited Stay for 40 days
 *No Base Rate Increase
 *Pipeline Replacement Rider
 *No Economic Development Rider

Commission Decides Atlanta Gas Light Rate Case



treatment of the 2002 sale of the Caroline Street facility.

The Commission decision also provides for an increase in the low-income senior citizen discount from \$10.50 to \$14.00 a month or the AGLC base charge up to \$14.00. The Commission also increased the funding for the Home and Heart program which will provide space heaters for qualified low-income recipients.

In addition, a majority of the Commission voted to authorize a

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Commissioners voted 3-2 on April 27 to reject Atlanta Gas Light Company's request for an increase in its base rates. The Commission voted to reduce AGLC revenues by \$21.9 million a year and use that money to offset any in-

creases in the Pipeline Replacement Rider. The Commission decision means AGLC customers will see no increase in their base rates.

However, on May 4, the Commission approved a limited stay of its order in the case, granting a 40-day stay on the

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2005 Legislature Ends

The 2005 session of the Georgia General Assembly ended March 31, 2005 as leaders made good on their promise to end the session before the mandated 40 day limit. Lawmakers adjourned *sine die* on day 39. Lawmakers had approved the state's FY 2006 budget on Day 38, clearing the way for the early adjourn-

ment. A number of bills cleared both the House and Senate during the session and have been signed by the Governor. They include: **HB 48.** Strengthens ethics laws. Includes a provision that requires lobbyists to report what they spend on officials with regulatory duties

including the Commission. Signed May 5.

HB 501. This bill abolishes the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety and creates the Department of Driver Services. The new department will focus on issuing driver's licenses. The measure assigns the DMVS functions to

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Legislature Funds Commission Budget Requests



The 2005 General Assembly funded two Commission requests in both the Fiscal Year 2005 Amended Budget and the 2006 Budget. In the Amended Budget, the conference committee included \$50,000 for per diem and fees to hire additional experts to testify in the Georgia Power Company Fuel Cost Recovery Docket. The committee at one point deleted it during their negotiations but after persistent discussions with committee members, the conference committee restored the money.

In the 2006 Budget, the conference committee approved



an additional \$175,000 to fund the Commission's move to consolidate staff. The money will fund moving staff currently in the 47 Trinity Building to the 254 Washington Street Building, reprogramming the spaces and updating them to IT and telecom standards.

The Governor had failed to include the funds for the move in his budget recommendations.

The 2006 Budget contains funds to reduce the increase in state

employees' health insurance premiums from 13% to 9%. The budget also provides for a 2% pay increase for all state employees and public school teachers beginning January 1, 2006.

Total spending for FY 2006 will be \$17.4 billion an increase of more than \$1 billion over FY 2005. The FY 2005 Amended Budget is an increase of \$191 million over the FY 2005 Budget approved during the 2004 General Assembly.



If you have a story for the next GPSC News, please send to Bill Edge, bille@psc.state.ga.us. Next issue deadline is July 15, 2005.

Atlanta Gas Light Rate Case

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Comprehensive Rate Plan for the Company which includes:

1. A Return on Equity (ROE) of 10.375%
2. Continuation of the Pipeline Replacement Program on its current 10-year schedule with current rates frozen for three years. This will save consumers \$46



News Media Covers AGL Decision

million.

3. A regulatory liability account

to be used to collect the estimated \$21.9 million excess earnings per year to be used to offset increases in the PRP.

The Commission decision followed extensive hearings in the case in January, March and April.

The Company filed for reconsideration of the Commission's decision on May 9 and may pursue an appeal in the courts.

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other agencies, including the PSC. The Commission would certificate truckers, limousines and household movers. Signed by the Governor May 2.

HB 669: This measure is the same as SB 91 which creates the audio information service. Signed May 9.

SB 274. Revises the Call Before You Dig Law. Brings local governments and authorities under



penalty provisions. Explained in separate article. Signed May 9. Other bills did not pass out this year but are carried over to the 2006 Session:

HB 562. Increases the regulatory utility assessment paid to support the Commission's

budget. Still in House Public Utilities Committee.

SB 209. Allows the Commission to take 90 days to decide a gas supply case. Passed Senate and in House Public Utilities Committee.

SB 210. Allows Commission to file uncontested orders with Superior Court. Passed Senate and in House Public Utilities Committee.

Commission Fines AT&T to Settle Improper Billing Charges



The Commission April 5 approved a fine of \$100,000 against AT&T Communications of the Southern States, LLC (AT&T) to resolve allegations that the company improperly billed more than 40,000 Georgia consumers a \$3.95 monthly recurring charge (MRC) for long distance services. The Commission approved the fine as part of a consent agreement between the Commission and the Company.

In January 2004, AT&T began billing the MRC to customers who select AT&T as their long



The world's networking company™

distance carrier and are being billed under AT&T's Basic Rate plan. AT&T describes their Basic Rate as the rate that is automatically charged to consumers who have not "specifically requested any other direct dialed station state-to-state pricing plan." The Commission's investigation of over 200 complaints received in 2004 about the MRC charge revealed that the erro-

neous charges resulted from a billing error that affected up to as many as one million consumers nationwide.

AT&T has since corrected its billing system and has issued apology letters, refunds and credits of more than \$180,000 to all affected Georgia consumers customers. In addition, the consent agreement requires the company to notify customers who continue to be

billed the MRC of the rates and terms of the Basic Rate plan and other options and rate plans that are available to them. AT&T will also provide 2,700 Prepaid Calling Cards to the Commission for distribution to soldiers of the Georgia National Guard who are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

GUFPA Takes Show on the Road

Gary Mason is on the speaking circuit to spread the word about the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act (GUFPA) or as it is commonly called the "Call Before You Dig Law." On February 12, he spoke to the Plumbing Mechanical Association chapter in Fayetteville. He is scheduled to speak to other PMA chapters in the coming months. On

April 26 and 27, he addressed the Governmental Affairs Committee of the Georgia Home Builders Association in Savannah. In June he will head to the Georgia Utility Contractor's Association Annual convention in Ponte Vedra, Florida to speak on the investigative and enforcement process of the Commission as related to the GUFPA.

Commission Approves Economic Aid for Liberty County Development

The Commission April 5 unanimously approved the disbursement of \$328,459 from the Universal Service Fund (USF) to Atlanta Gas Light Company (AGLC) to construct more than four miles of 4-inch high pressure steel natural gas line to serve a major economic devel-



opment project in Liberty County.

The project will provide natural gas service to a Target Distribution Center that will create up to 800 jobs by the end of 2007. Construction is expected to begin in the fall of this year with

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Governor Signs Call Before You Dig Revisions Into Law



Governor **Sonny Perdue** signed into law May 9 Senate Bill 274 which revises the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act (GUFPA). The bill cleared its final hurdle on the last day of the 2005 General Assembly. Senator Mitch Seabaugh (R-Sharpsburg) sponsored the measure. One of the key points of the measure is that for the first time local governments and authorities are subject to fines and penalties levied by the Commission although the fines have caps both on a per violation and an annual basis. The legislation limits fines on



Commissioner Stan Wise, Jim Bottone, Danny McGriff, Senator Seabaugh and Bill Edge join Governor Perdue for the bill signing

a local governing authority to \$5,000 per violation and \$50,000 yearly. In addition the legislation provides for a revamped Advisory Committee to conduct investigations and make recommendations to the Commission on violations of GUFPA. However, the Commission can not levy fines against local governments until January 1, 2007. The legislation is the re-

sult of nearly two years work, beginning late in 2003 before the 2004 General Assembly. The Excavation Study Committee worked through the summer and fall prior to the 2005 Session to draft a bill which all parties could agree to. In the end, representatives from the cities, counties, excavators, utilities, locators and the Commission gave approval to the measure.

May Is Dig Safely Month



tion designating May as "Dig Safely Month."

Governor Sonny Perdue joined with representatives from the Commission, Utilities Protection Center, utilities, cities, counties, excavators and locators to issue a proclama-

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an estimated completion date of the first quarter of 2007.

Commissioner Doug Everett, who moved to approve the project, said, "This is a classic case why the USF was created. This area is growing rapidly." Commissioner David Burgess added, "This Commis-

sion can make a difference for the people of Liberty County." On a motion by Commissioner Stan Wise, the Commission attached three conditions to the USF disbursement:

1. AGLC will require Liberty County to obtain an affidavit from Target that they are committed to natural gas.
2. AGLC will file yearly reports for the next three years

detailing the number and types of jobs actually filled during each year.

AGLC will track new customer tie-ins to the line in order to allow refunds to the USF. For more information, use the Docket Search function on the Commission website, www.psc.state.ga.us, and enter Docket Number 11588.

Commission Holds Hearings on Georgia Power Fuel Case

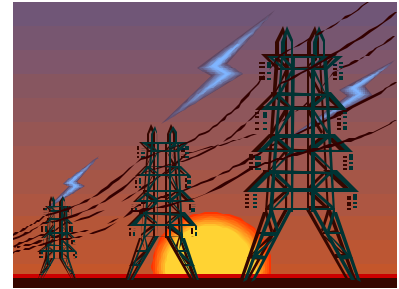


The Commission completed three days of hearings April 18 through 20 on the largest fuel cost recovery case in Georgia Power history. The Company has filed for an increase in its fuel cost recovery rate that amounts to a 9.8 percent increase on the average residential customer bill or about \$7.92 per month.

Staff consultant John Heaton testified that two factors added more than \$51 million to the cost of fuel paid by Georgia Power in 2003 and 2004: 1. Coal company



bankruptcies in 2003 and 2004 and, 2. The failure to hold CSX Railroad responsible for equipment and crew shortages. Heaton said however he found no evidence of imprudent or wrong doing based on current Commission standards.



Georgia Power witnesses however said the Company took measures to get fuel at the best price possible.

The Commission will issue its decision in this case during its Regular Administrative Session on May 17, 2005.

Feds Tighten a Provision of the Do Not Call Rules

The Commission has informed subscribers to the "do not call list" of a recent change to the Federal Do No Call Registry's rules enacted by the Federal Communications Commission. The rule change concerns the number of times telemarketers are required to "scrub" their lists against the Federal Registry.

Until recently, telemarketers were required to scrub their list every three months. Since January 1, 2005, telemarketers have been required to scrub their lists every 31 days. This is significant for consumers because it reduces by two-thirds the amount of time between registrations and when enforcement begins.

If you receive telemarketing

calls after your telephone number has been in the Registry for more than 31 days, you may file a complaint at www.donotcall.gov or by calling 1-888-382-1222, TTY 1-866-290-4236. Also, you may contact the Governor's Office of Consumer Affairs which is responsible for enforcing the Georgia Do Not Call law. Call the Governor's Office of

Consumer Affairs at (404) 657-7544, or toll-free at 1-800-805-7544 to report a violation or for additional information. Before filing a complaint, please try to identify the telemarketer by obtaining either the name of the company or the phone number from which the call was made.

Consumers may register with the Federal Do Not Call Reg-



istry (which automatically places consumers on the Georgia Do Not Call List) online at www.donotcall.gov, or by calling 1-888-382-1222, TTY 1-866-290-4236 from the number that is to be enrolled.

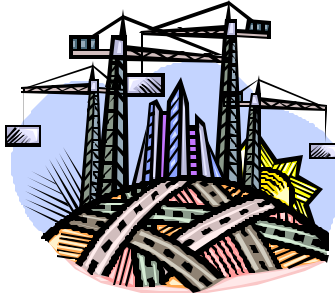
Commission Considers Public Interest Test for Universal Service Fund



Commissioners April 5 approved a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NOPR) to establish a public interest test in disbursing monies from the Universal Service Fund (USF) for economic development projects. The Commission will hear oral arguments on the NOPR on June 1, 2005. The NOPR is found under Docket Number 15326-U.

The NOPR calls for applications which do not meet public interest criteria to meet the following conditions:

1. The application must show that it creates at least ten jobs.



2. The project is in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county.

3. If the requested funding is for an interruptible customer, then all funds received must be paid back to the USF within five years.

4. If the funding is for an indus-

trial park, the applicant must provide an affidavit showing a commitment to natural gas. In addition, if the EDC fails to begin construction to provide the customer with natural gas then within 180 days, then the application will be null and void.

The NORP includes reporting requirements for the EDC. The EDC would also be allowed to use 80 percent of its 5 percent cap for multiple year line-extensions projects into areas that are currently unserved or underserved.

Open enrollment Underway for 2005-2006 Benefit Year

Open Enrollment for the State Benefits plan is underway. After several years of preparation, MANDATORY ONLINE OPEN ENROLLMENT has arrived. All employees must select their benefits online. No Option Statements will be printed.

The Georgia Merit System and the Department of Community Health will be introducing a plan year change effective January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006. To accommodate this change to a calendar plan year, coverage selected during this Open Enrollment period will be effective

from July 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005. A second open enrollment period will be offered in the fall for plan year 2006 benefits. More information on this change will be provided later.

Check Those Long Distance Service Charges

Have you recently contacted your local telephone company to request that your long distance service be discontinued? If so, there's a possibility that you may still be in your long distance service provider's database and may receive an unexpected and unwanted

bill.

The Commission learned in a recently-settled case with a telecommunications service provider that several consumers who had called their local telephone company to cancel long distance services were still in the long distance company's database. As a result, these

"former customers" were billed a monthly recurring charge even though they did not make any long distance calls through the former carrier.

Consumers are advised to do the following to avoid receiving unwanted bills and to

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Employee News

Congratulations

Congratulations to new grandmother **deLancey Todd**, Telecommunications Analyst. Her daughter Laura gave birth to an 8 lb., ½ oz. baby girl on March 30. Her name is Geneva deLancey. All are doing fine.

Congratulations to **Bill Edge**, Public Information Office, on the birth of new granddaughter, Brianna Courtney Moore. Brianna made her appearance May 5 in Asheville, North Carolina. Proud parents are Brandy and Rodney Moore of Fletcher, N.C.

Dominique Hayman, 16 year old grandson of **Ruby Robinson**, assistant to Commissioner Burgess, is being honored as a member of the Achievers program. The program supports college bound young men in all areas of achievement and exposes them to professional, educational, entrepreneurial and cultural experiences to promote per-

Congratulations to **Carolyn Harrison** on the arrival of her new Grandson, Eric Robert Harrison, on April 7 at 7:10 pm. He weighed in 9lbs 1 oz. and 21 inches long. The proud parents are Eric and Melissa Harrison, Carolyn's son and daughter of Woodstock, Georgia.



sonal and intellectual growth. Niq, as the proud Grandmother calls him, has already received two scholarships and several awards. He has traveled to New York as representative of the program and will also go to California and Europe in late June under the program. The ceremony will be in late April.



Carolyn has also been selected as a Statewide Honorable Mention for Public Employee Recognition Week in the Community Service Category.

Sympathy

The Commission expresses its condolences to **Commissioner David Burgess** on the passing of his mother, Louise Burgess, on April 26. Funeral services were held April 30 at Turner Monument AME Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

We would like to express our condolences to **Bruce Morgan**, Pipeline Safety, on the passing of his mother, Sara Morgan, on April 1. Funeral services were held April 3 in Sparta, Georgia.

Check Long Distance Charges

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make sure they enroll in services with a telecommunications company that best fit their needs.

Call your local telephone company to cancel your long distance service. Follow-up with a call to your long distance service provider within a few days to make sure your service has been canceled and that your account is closed.

Monitor your telephone bill in the following months to make sure the changes were made. Always check your telephone bill for accuracy. The longer a billing error goes undetected, the harder it may be to get the erroneous charges corrected.

Consider calling your local telephone company to place a long distance block on your line or request that no long

distance carrier be associated with your line to prevent long distance charges.

Evaluate whether your calling pattern has changed. If so, contact your long distance service provider to discuss plans that are available which may be more suitable for you.

Get rate information from several providers so that you have a comparison before making your final decision.

Commission News



Georgia State Holidays For 2005

Commission Calendar



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

May

3-Administrative Session
12-Committees
17-Administrative Session
30-Holiday

June

2-Committees
7-Administrative Session
16-Committees
21-Administrative Session
30-Committees

July

4-Holiday

Commission Calendar

5-Administrative Session
14-Committees
19-Administrative Session
28-Committees

August

2-Administrative Session
11-Committees
16-Administrative Session

September

1-Committees
6-Administrative Session

NARUC

Summer Meeting

July 24-27, 2005
Austin, Texas

Annual Convention

November 13-16, 2005
Palm Springs, CA

Winter Meeting 2006

February 13-16, 2006
Washington, D.C.

SEARUC

June 6-8, 2005

North Covington, Ky.

GPSC ONLINE:

www.psc.state.ga.us



The Public Information Office publishes GPSC News for the Georgia Public Service Commission. Information for GPSC News should be sent to: Bill Edge, 244 Washington St. S.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30334. Discussion of regulatory matters in this newsletter should not be construed as legal interpretations of orders or rules issued by the Commission.

COMMISSIONERS

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Robert B. Baker, Jr.

David L. Burgess

H. Doug Everett

Stan Wise

