



GPSC News

Volume 5 Issue 3

Spring 2006

Legislature Finishes Work Under Gold Dome

*State Budget totals \$18.6 Billion
 *Commission receives increase in consultant funding
 *Raises for teachers and state workers
 *Commission receives funding for Georgia Power Fuel Case
 *May 9 is deadline for Governor to sign or veto bills

In this issue

Legislative Update	2
Legislative Update	2
Wise Attends FCC Swearing In Ceremony	2
Commission Adopts Staff Efficiency Review	3
Commission Holds Life-Link Workshop	3
Commission Approves New Audible Information Service	4
10-Digit Dialing Mandatory in 706 Area	4
Pipeline Safety Seminar Draws Record Crows	5
Commission Community Outreach	6
Commissioner Everett Hosts Chinese Visitor	6
Employee News	7
State Holidays	8
Commission Calendar	8

Lawmakers finished their 2006 40-day legislative session on March 30, 2006 by passing a state budget for Fiscal Year 2007 and then adjourning sine die to head home and hit the campaign trail. The Commission fared fairly well during this session with the passage of additional money in our budget for hiring outside experts and consultants for rate cases. The Conference Committee on the FY 2007 Budget approved an additional \$200,000 for the Commission to fund experts and consultants for upcoming rate cases,



The FY 2007 Budget also includes an additional \$110,215 in the Commission's budget for two new positions for the Transportation section. Overall, state employees will receive from 2 to 4 percent in pay raises effective January 1, 2007, depending on where their salary falls within their salary schedule. Teachers and

giving the Commission a total of more than \$776,000 for this purpose.

public safety workers get the biggest raises of up to seven percent.

The legislature also gave final approval to two Commission sponsored bills, Senate 209 and Senate bill 210. Both passed the House after passing the Senate in 2005. They are now on the Governor's desk for his signature. The Governor has until May 9 to either sign or veto legislation. If he takes no action, any legislation becomes law without his signature.

(Continued on page 2)

Commission Completes Move to New Quarters

The Commission's Utilities Section, Pipeline Safety, Facilities Protection, Administrative Attorneys and Records Section completed their long awaited move to new spaces in early January. These staff members moved from the 47 Trinity Building to the first and second floors of the



254 Washington Street Building. The move culminated the end of a nearly nine year long renovation and relocation project for the Commission. These Commission staff members moved out of the 244 Washington Street Building in 1997

(Continued on page 2)

Greg Peacock moves furniture to new office

Legislative Update

(Continued from page 1)

ture.

In the Amended FY 2006 Budget, the legislature approved an additional \$50,000 for experts and consultants to assist with the preparation of the Georgia Power Fuel Cost Recovery filing, Docket Number 22403-U.

Governor Sonny Perdue signed **Senate Bill 120**, the Competing Technologies legislation, into law April 28. The measure would prohibit the Commission from regulating Voice Over Internet Protocol, wireless and cable technologies.

One controversial measure that failed to pass was **House Bill 1325**, which would have al-

lowed Atlanta Gas Light to building a pipeline outside the rate base. The measure passed the House but ran into a wall of resistance in the Senate. Though strongly backed by the House leadership, intense media scrutiny and lobbying from environmental and consumer groups apparently doomed the bill in the Senate. It was placed on the Senate calendar in the final days of the session but Senate leaders postponed action on the measure and it was not brought up again.

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, 2006.

Move



(Continued from page 1)

for what was supposed to be an 18-month renovation process.

Commissioners, Administrative functions, Consumer Affairs and IT moved into the renovated 244 Washington Street Building in late 2000 but the renovation had expanded the square footage of the offices making it impossible to move the other Commission offices.

After overcoming funding and logistical challenges, the renovation of 254 Washington Street was completed and everyone moved by mid-January.

Commissioner Wise Attends Swearing in of New FCC Member

Commission Chairman Stan Wise attended the official swearing in of Deborah Tate as a member of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on March 3 in our nation's capital.

The ceremony took place in the Indian Treaty Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office



(l-r) Commissioner Wise, Commissioner Tate, Denise Wise

Building. FCC Chairman Kevin J. Martin made remarks.

Commissioner Wise was accompanied by his wife Denise. Commissioner Tate had served on the Tennessee Regulatory Authority prior to her appointment to the FCC.

Wise Greets President

Commission Chairman Stan Wise served as one of the state's official greeters when President George W. Bush visited Atlanta March 9. Commissioner Wise greeted our nation's chief executive as he departed Air Force One following the landing at Harts-



field-Jackson International Airport.

The President came to Atlanta to speak to a President's Day Republican Party fundraiser at the Georgia International Trade and Convention Center in College Park.

Commission Approves Staff Efficiency Review

The Commission March 21 adopted eight recommendations contained in the Staff Efficiency Review Report, Docket Number 22268, initiated January 24, 2006 at the request of Commissioner Stan Wise. These staff recommendations include:

- Rename the current Adversary Team to "Public Interest Advocacy Staff; rename the Staff Advisory Team the "Commissioner Advisory Staff."
- The above named staff teams should be used in rate cases and other complex cases as designated by the Commission.
- During contested cases in which these teams are used, a

"Chinese Wall" procedure or non-structural separation should be implemented.

- Preview of Commissioner Advisory Staff case recommendations at Committee meetings will be allowed.

The Commission should continue to use the services of outside consultants for both staff teams to ensure both teams will have the expertise required in preparing their recommendations.

The Commission also adopted an additional recommendation by Commissioner Wise that calls for the Commission to initiate a Notice of Proposed Rule Making to improve due process practices at the Commission.

This rule would essentially state the following:

In determining findings of fact or in its deliberations, the Commission will hold no presumption in favor of the position of any party. The Commissioners shall only give weight and credit to any party in the case as can be supported by credible evidence in the record.

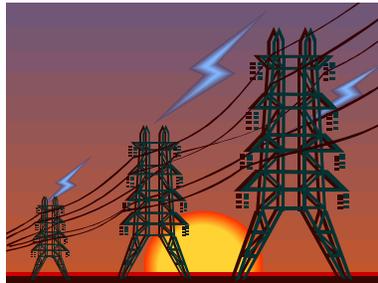
The Commission's decision follows a two month review process by a Staff Review Committee that included two public hearings and the issuance of a 19-page report.



Commission Reviews Georgia Power-Savannah Electric Fuel Cost Case

The Commission will hold a hearing on May 23 to hear from interested parties on the proposed merger of Georgia Power Company and Savannah Electric and Power Company, Docket Number 22202.

The parties have identified nine issues of interest the Commission will consider during the



hearing.

The Commission staff and other parties held a technical conference May 3 in Savannah on the proposed merger.

The Commission is scheduled to vote on the staff's recommendations on the issues at its regular Administrative Session on June 20, 2006.

Commission Holds Lifelink Workshop

Commission staff gathered with telecommunications representatives to discuss the feasibility of changes in the Lifelink program which provides discounted telephone rates for basic residential telephone service.

Workshop participants dis-

cussed whether the Life-Link eligibility should be:

1. Linked to the School Lunch Program;
2. Have an income only criteria;
3. Have an automated interface; and
4. Frequency of Community Outreach.



Commission Approves New Audible Universal Information Access Service Provider

The Commission March 21 approved a provider for the Audible Universal Information Access Service (AUIAS) which will be operational on June 1, 2006. The AUIAS is an automated service that allows blind and "print disabled" persons, through the use of the telephone, to access a range of print media. Selected print media is then ready to the caller by synthetic speech, over which the caller has a range of control. The Commission selected the

National Federation of the Blind as the AUIAS provider for the three-year period June 1, 2006 to May 31, 2009.

The Georgia General Assembly approved House Bill 669 in the 2005 session which gives the Commission the responsibility for establishing, implementing, administering and promoting a state-wide Audible Universal Information Access Service. HB 669 required the AUIAS to be operational no later than July 1, 2006.

HB 669 also provides that the

AUIAS will be funded by the Telecommunications Relay Service monthly surcharge on local telephone company subscribers' monthly bills. This surcharge is presently \$0.10 per access line per month. Creation of the AUIAS will not require this surcharge to be increased.



Mandatory 10-digit dialing Begins in Area Code 706

Mandatory ten-digit dialing became effective Monday April 3, 2006 in the 706 area code. Consumers must now dial ten-digits within the 706 area code to complete all calls whether local or long distance. This change is due to the implementation of "762" as the new overlay area code to provide area code relief in the 706 service area. Current phone

numbers will not change area codes but all new telephone numbers will be assigned the new area code once the new code is placed into service.

The Commission issued an order on June 23, 2005 setting the all services distributed overlay as the preferred method of relief for 706. The North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA)

NeuStar, Incorporated then issued 762 as the new area code assignment.

The 706 area code includes the major Georgia cities of Athens, Augusta, Columbus, Cornelia, Dalton, LaGrange, Rome, and Toccoa.

Based on planning projections, NANPA estimates this new area code will last at least 13 years before another area code is needed.

Commission Approves Relief to Low-Income Consumers

Low-income natural gas customers will receive more than \$8 million in additional assistance to help pay this winter's high natural gas bills. The Commission March 21 ordered \$5.1 million in relief for low-income senior citizens who are now receiving the Atlanta Gas Light Company

senior citizen discount. Each qualified senior citizen will receive a \$150 credit.

The Commission has committed more than \$14 million from Universal Service Fund this winter heating season to assist low-income natural gas customers cope with the continuing increase in energy costs.

This decision also commits \$3 million to low-income customers who are not senior citizens.

The Commission April 18 also allocated an additional \$400,000 for assistance to low-income senior citizens. This funding will provide grants up to \$1,000 to seniors who have past due balances.

Pipeline Safety Seminar Draws Record Attendance

The 32nd annual Pipeline Safety Seminar in Macon set an all time attendance record with over 350 people in attendance. The meeting included eleven breakout workshops: Odorization, Corrosion, Welding, DOT E-Permits, Static Electricity, Drug/Alcohol, Leak Survey, Metering, Equipment Repairs, Pipe Joining, GUFPA.

This training provides critical updates for the Operators of natural gas systems in the operation



and maintenance of their facilities and provides education to the Operators and Local Governments regarding the new requirements under the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act (GUFPA).

In addition, Operators were provided instruction on the latest regulation requirements for RP1162. This Rule concerns efforts to im-

prove public awareness of pipeline operations and safety issues through enhanced communications with the public in the pipeline vicinity and its associated rights-of-way. Effective public awareness programs are vital to continued safe pipeline operations. Such programs are an important factor in establishing communications

with affected stakeholders, providing information necessary to enhance public awareness of pipelines and communicating stakeholder roles relative to pipeline safety. Effective programs also can increase awareness and understanding of the important energy transportation role of pipelines, pipeline operations, associated public and environmental risks, and

steps taken to prevent and mitigate those risks. Additionally, they can improve results in damage prevention, reduce encroachments on pipeline rights-of-way, improve pipeline safety and environmental performance, and enhance emergency response coordination. Operators are required to submit their public awareness plans to federal and state agencies no later than June 20, 2006.

The Staff would also like to thank the States of South Carolina, Alabama, and Florida for allowing representatives of their Commissions to attend our seminar. Communication among other states in the region is of vital importance to ensure uniformity for safety throughout the Southern Region.



Commissioners Provide Community Outreach

Commissioners **David Burgess** and **Doug Everett** along with Consumer Affairs staff led an educational outreach mission to Waycross on April 20 at the invitation of the local community action agency, Concerted Services, Inc. The Commissioners spoke to more than 60 senior citizens at the Nelson Green Senior Center on consumer rights, energy conservation, rates, billing problems and natural gas pricing. Earlier, Concerted Services Executive Director Clarence Billups took the Commissioners and staff to site of a home weatherization project. Commission staff who took part in the presentation were Infor-



Commissioner Burgess explains some of the discounts available to senior citizens

mation and Referral Specialists **Beverly Brown** and **Nakeisha Bowman** and Public Information Officer **Bill Edge**. The local newspaper, the Waycross Journal Herald provided front page coverage of the meeting. The tour of the weatherization project was quite interesting. Commissioners and staff got an up-front and personal

look at the many ways to update, insulate and weatherize older homes. The homeowner, Eddie Kate Green, is receiving the weatherization thanks to a grant from the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority. The GEFA Weatherization Program can provide up to several thousand dollars from a variety of sources to weatherize eligible homes. Concerted Services is able to weatherize as many as 100 homes a year, according to Billups.



Commissioner David Burgess gets a tour of the weatherization project with Project Director Bill Beverly and Homeowner Eddie Kate Green outside Ms. Green's home in Waycross.

Commissioner Everett Hosts Chinese Official

Commissioner **Doug Everett** recently hosted Liu Tie, the Director of the Economic Development Department of the Sichuan Provincial Government in the People's Republic of China. Lui, known as Tim, spent several weeks observing the Commission and its regulation of electric utilities.

Sichuan Province is considering allowing private utilities to operate alongside the current state owned and operated utilities. Tim says he hopes to improve the working relationships between the government and developing private enterprises.



Tim (Liu Tie) and Commissioner Everett



Employee News

Army Recruiter Head Visits Commissioner Speir

Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir recently hosted a visit from the new commander of the U.S. Army Atlanta 2nd Recruiting Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Twala D. Mathis. Lt. Col. Mathis is the first African-American woman to hold this post which is responsible for overseeing U.S. Army recruiting in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Is-



lands. She will assume her new post on June 2, 2006. Lt. Col. Mathis is a native of Albany, Georgia, where she attended Monroe High School and graduated from Albany State College in 1988. She has served in Korea, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Commissioner Speir

Commissioner Wise Makes Appearance on WXIA-TV Program

Commission Chairman Stan Wise appeared on the WXIA-TV public affairs program, "Weekend In Depth" on March 5 hosted by WXIA-TV reporter Denis O'Hayer. Former Commissioner and now AARP lobbyist Cas Robinson was also on the segment with



Commissioner Wise. The topics included the recent Georgia Power filing to set up an account to begin the licensing and certification process for a new nuclear power facility in Georgia.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to **Winifred Gaines** on the death of her father, James E. Gaines, April 18. The funeral was held April 22.

Our condolences go to **Commissioner David Burgess** on the passing of his father, Alphonzo Burgess, February 18. Mr. Burgess's funeral was February 24.

In Memoriam



We also mourn the passing March 2 of longtime Commission employee and friend **Ruby Robinson**. Ruby served here as Commissioner Burgess' Administrative Assistant. Her memorial service was held March 8. Ruby had worked at the Commission

since July 1999 and most recently was the Administrative Assistant to **Commissioner David Burgess**. All who knew her will miss her greatly. Our sympathy goes out to her family and friends.



Commission News



Georgia State Holidays For 2006

New Year's Day	January 2
Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday	January 16
Confederate Memorial Day	April 24
Memorial Day	May 29
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	September 4
Columbus Day	October 9
Veterans Day	November 10
Thanksgiving	November 23
Robert E. Lee Birthday	November 24
Christmas	December 25
President's Day	December 26

Commission Calendar



May

2-Administrative Session
11-Committees
16-Administrative Session
17-18-Ga.Power Fuel Case
23-Ga.Power Merger Hearing
25-Ga.Power Hearing
29-Holiday

June

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

Commission Calendar

SEARUC Meeting 2006

June 18-21, 2006
Boca Raton, Fla.

29-Committees

July

4-Holiday
5-Administrative Session
13-Committees
18-Administrative Session
27-Committees

August

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

NARUC

Summer Meeting 2006

July 30— August 2, 2006
San Francisco, CA

Annual Convention 2006

November 13-16, 2006
Palm Springs, CA

Winter Meeting 2007

February 12-15, 2007
Washington, D.C.

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