



# GPSC News

Volume 7 Issue 4

Fall 2008

- \*Public witnesses speak
- \*Nuclear Power Certification
- \*More hearings set for January 12-16, 2009, February 9-13, 2009
- \*Decision March 17, 2009

## Commission Begins Nuclear Power Hearings

More than 40 citizens expressed their opinions as the Commission November 3 opened its review of the Georgia Power Company filing seeking Commission certification of two new nuclear power generation units at Plant Vogtle in southeast Georgia. (Docket 27800)



The public filled the hearing room to capacity as the speakers spoke both for and against the Company's proposal. Starting November 5, Georgia Power witnesses presented the Company's case. Those hearings finished on November 6. The remaining schedule

for hearings is as follows: January 12-16, 2009 - Staff and intervenor testimony February 9-13, 2009 - Company rebuttal March 17, 2009 - Commission decision. The Advocacy Staff will file its testimony on December 19. Georgia Power's 2007 In-

tegrated Resource Plan (IRP), which the Commission approved on June 16, 2007, stated that Georgia would need an additional 1,100 Megawatts of new baseload electric power generation in the 2016 and 2017 timeframe to meet the state's growth. (Continued on page 3)

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## Commission Decides Atmos Rate Case

The Commission September 17 voted 3-2 to decrease the Atmos Energy Company (Atmos) rate request by \$2.7 million. (Docket Number 27163) The Company had sought an annual revenue increase of \$6.1 million which would have resulted in an estimated monthly increase of \$4.71 on the average residential cus-

tomers' bill. Details of the rate case decision include: Increase in month residential customer charge from \$7.00 to \$10.50; Total increase in rates of \$3.4 million; Return on equity set at 10.7%; Increase in income level for senior citizen discount to \$14,355 annually. The Commission decision

followed three rounds of hearings in Atlanta and Gainesville to receive testimony and evidence in this docket. Atmos Energy serves about 65,000 customers in Columbus and Gainesville.



## State Legislative Update

The Commission's budget presentation to Governor Sonny Perdue is set for Monday November 24, 2008. Since August, state agencies have been operating under a six percent cut in their budget allotments. The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget also instructed all agencies to submit three separate budget scenarios for the 2009 Amended Budget and the 2010 Fiscal Year budget. The Commission made its first budget presentation to the Senate Economic Development Budget Subcommittee on October 6, 2008. **Commissioner Chuck Eaton** presented the Commission's budget submission.



Chairman Eaton speaks to the Senate Budget Committee

The Commission also made a presentation October 22 to the House Telecommunications Competition Review Study Committee. Shaun Rosemond advised the committee

If you have a story for the next GPSC News, please send to Bill Edge, [bille@psc.state.ga.us](mailto:bille@psc.state.ga.us). Next issue deadline is January 15, 2009.

of the current status of intra-state access charges compared to interstate access charges. The Committee is scheduled to hold one more meeting before the start of the next legislative session.

### 2008 Election Results for PSC

#### PSC District 1

Everett -R	66.7%
Monds-L	33.3%

#### PSC District 4

McDonald-R	47.3%
Powell-D	47.7%
Givens-L	4.9%

Runoff will be held December 2

## Speir Criticizes Action on Hot Weather Rule

In a 3 to 2 decision, the Commission voted October 21 to remove a provision from a proposed rule that would have extended a ban on disconnections during extreme heat to two days following the date a National Weather Service Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning was in effect. "Unfortunately," **Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir** said, "the proposed rule



as amended today fails to protect those who most need protection: the elderly, sick and the very young." Specifically,

Commissioner Speir notes that studies by the Centers for Disease

Control and the Environmental Protection Agency show that people can die even with a heat index of only 105 degrees and that most deaths and serious illness caused by extreme heat typically lag a few days behind the spike in temperatures.

"In August of 2007, I proposed that the Commission initiate a proceeding to increase the protections for Georgia consum-

ers. The amended rule, however, does not increase the protections. If anything, it is a step backwards. More people in this country die each year from excess heat than from tornadoes, floods, hurricanes and lightning combined. And the real tragedy is that most heat related deaths are avoidable. I believe some of my colleagues have turned a blind eye to a very real and life

threatening issue."

The Commission first approved an order on September 4, 2007 requiring Georgia Power Company to file an inclusion in its tariff providing for a ban on disconnections if at 8 a.m. on the scheduled disconnection day, the forecasted high temperature for the day is 98 degrees or higher or the heat index for the day is forecasted to be 110 degrees or higher.

Commissioner Speir is serving her first six-year term on the Commission. In 2005 she was the first woman to serve as Commission Chairman.



## Commission Approves Revised Green Energy Program and Cobb 3-1-1 Assignment

The Commission September 15 unanimously approved changes in Georgia Power's Green Energy program that will result in lower rates for consumers purchasing Green Energy blocks and also offer a Large Volume Purchase and Special Events option. (Docket Number 16573)

The new tariff will allow consumers to purchase 100 Kilowatt blocks of Green Energy for \$3.50, a reduction of \$1 from the previous tariff.

The Large Volume Purchase will allow customers who purchase at least 400 blocks under the

standard Green Energy offering to contract with Georgia Power for additional renewable energy at a reduced price. Georgia Power will contract individually with each customer to determine the price, quantity, term and source of the additional green energy.

Under the Commission approved proposal, the modified Green Energy product will be all biomass, primarily from the Seminole Landfill in DeKalb County, and will contain no solar or wind en-

ergy at this time. However, Georgia Power will offer a Premium Green Energy Product at \$4.50 per block which receives at least two percent of its energy from solar resources.

In other action, the Commission approved the assignment of 3-1-1 to the Cobb County Government to allow its citizens get the latest information on their county government and to report non-emergency situations. According to the County's filing, this new dialing assignment will serve about 700,000 Cobb County citizens when the service begins February 1, 2009.



## Commissioners Present at Bonbright Conference

Commissioners **Chuck Eaton** and **Stan Wise** participated in panel discussions at the 2008 Annual Bon-

bright Conference on Electric and Natural Gas in Atlanta.

**Commissioner Stan Wise** said as far as resource planning decisions are concerned, the key is diversity and that the next generation of nuclear is vital to the state.

**Commissioner Eaton** said consumers take their utility



facilities for granted and need to be educated on the costs of energy production.

## Commission Opens Nuclear Review

(Continued from page 1)

ing energy needs. Under state law, new power generation cannot be added to the system without a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by this Commission.

Georgia Power issued a request for proposal (RFP) in late 2006, seeking baseload generation

from both self build generation and third party bids.

(right) **Billy Harper**, former Burke County Commissioner, speaks to the Commission during the Vogtle Certification hearing November 3.



## Commission Approves Catalyst Customer Transfer

The Commission October 6 conditionally approved a request by Catalyst Energy, LLC ("Catalyst") to transfer its customers to MX Energy, another Georgia gas marketer.

The Federal Bankruptcy Court in Atlanta approved the transfer on October 8.

Under the terms of the transfer agreement, MX Energy will honor the fixed rate contracts of Catalyst's customers and will send each of the customers written notification of the transfer.

**Commissioner Stan Wise** greeted 10 Russian energy officials during their visit here on November 4.

Their visit had 3 purposes:

1. Learn about U.S. expertise and experience in energy efficiency;
2. Become familiar with the best practices of energy efficiency policy in the U.S.;
3. Receive examples of public-private partner-

## Commission Greeted International Visitors from Russia

ships in the field of energy efficiency;

Wise said, "I am pleased that the Commission can pass on its expertise and knowledge to our friends from the Russian Republic."

Staff member **Pandora Epps** also took part in the briefing.

Three interpreters accompanied the Russians on their U.S. travels. They have already traveled to Utah, Wyoming, Washington, D.C. and New York.



## Hot Weather Rule Sent Out for More Comment

The Commission October 21, 2008 Administrative Session. Amended a proposed rule prohibiting hot weather disconnections under certain conditions. This vote triggers a new round of comments under the Administrative Procedures Act. Under the National Weather Service Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning is in effect for the county of the scheduled disconnection. The Commission opened a docket on hot weather disconnections in

August 2007 at the urging of **Commissioner Angela Speir**.

The Commission has had in place since 1979 rules prohibiting disconnections of residential electric service between November 15 and March 15 when the forecasted low temperature for a 24 hour period beginning at 8:00 A.M. on the date of the proposed disconnection is below 32 de-

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Ukrainian Mayors Visit Commission

Seven Ukrainian mayors visited the Commission October 22 to learn more about utility regulation. **Commissioners Chuck Eaton and Robert Baker** spoke to the visitors along with staff members **Pandora Epps and Cynthia Johnson**. The group's visit was arranged by the G-16 Global Alliance Network.



## Georgia Do Not Call Registration Passes Five Million Mark

The number of Georgians cell phone and landline tele- registered on the Do Not Call List passed the five million mark on August 1, 2008. More than 5.1 million telephone phone numbers have been automatically included in the Georgia Do Not Call List. The telephone numbers remain on the Registry until service is disconnected. There is no cost to enroll your telephone numbers. Telemarketers are required to scrub their telemarketing lists against the Federal Do Not Call Registry every 31 days. Georgians may register their

## Wise Attends Republican National Convention

Commissioner Stan Wise got an personal glimpse into the national political scene as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, September 2-6.



## Lifeline/Link-Up Enrollment Increases 34 Percent

The Commission reports a 34 percent increase in the number of telephone subscribers to the Lifeline/Link-Up Georgia Program over the last twelve month period. As of June 30, 2008 there were 99,665 Lifeline/Link-Up subscribers. This is the biggest increase these programs have experienced since their inception more than 15 years ago. The increase is primarily attributable to partnering with other state agencies (the Division of Family and Children’s Services, which administers the Georgia Food Stamp Program and the Georgia Department of Community Health) along with a strong outreach effort to get the word out about these valuable programs. Lifeline provides a monthly credit of up to \$10 off residential monthly local service telephone bill (AT&T gives a \$13.50 monthly credit); while,

Link-Up assists with paying up to 50% of installation costs, not to exceed \$30 (AT&T pays 100% of installation costs).

In order to qualify for these programs, applicants must be a participant in any one of the following programs: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TNAF), Food Stamps, senior citizens discount from power or gas company, SSI, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.



## Revised Hot Weather Rule Sent Out for Comment

(Continued from page 4) Commission rules also specify under what conditions residential electric service can be disconnected, such as non-payment of bills.

## Commission Urges Consumers to Get Ready for Winter Heating Season

Heating homes and businesses this winter is likely to cost more as a result of higher natural gas prices,

**Commission Chairman Chuck Eaton** said, "Despite recent decreases in prices, it appears likely that natural gas costs this winter will be higher than the last two years. Consumers should begin preparing for the winter heating season now by taking some simple steps. Weatherizing your home can make a big difference when cold weather arrives."

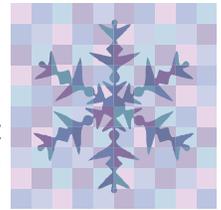
Eaton also urged consumers to look into budget billing plans and compare marketer pricing

options. He also advises consumers who might qualify for heating assistance programs to begin preparing for the application process now.

Homeowners with natural gas, the most popular heating source in the United States, will pay \$1,059 on average to heat their homes this winter, a 23.8% increase, according to the early forecast by the Energy Information Administration, the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Energy. The EIA's projections are based on government meteorologists' expectations for a winter that is colder than last year but warmer than the aver-

age seen from 1971 to 2000. An especially cold winter would hit household budgets even harder.

A number of factors have contributed to the increase in natural gas prices which are driven by supply and demand. Natural gas prices have been moving higher since 2003 with most of the increase due to rising demand that has strained the ability of producers to keep pace. The Commission does not regulate the price of natural gas. Natural gas marketers in the Atlanta Gas Light delivery area which serves 1.5



million customers are allowed to set prices according to market conditions. Natural gas prices charged by marketers can change on a monthly basis.

Atmos Energy which serves customers in Columbus and Gainesville is allowed to recover the cost of natural gas on a dollar for dollar basis.

### CONSUMER FACTS

Georgia consumers can take a number of steps to reduce the

impact of higher natural gas costs. They include:

**Budget Billing:** Consumers who are on a budget, retired or on a fixed income may find budget billing to be an attractive payment option. It allows consumers to make levelized monthly payments on their bills, and is available whether consumers have fixed or variable rate plans. Budget billing can help consumers avoid the spikes in their winter heating bills.

**Energy Conservation:** Conservation is vital to any plan of action to lower one's monthly utility bill. Purchasing energy-efficient equipment such as a furnace, hot water heater and/or stove, caulking around doors and windows, insulating walls, floors and the attic, are some things consumers can do to lower their winter heating bills. Of course, if the consumer's equipment is working properly, be sure to have these inspected by a pro-

fessional to insure operation at maximum efficiency.

**Weatherization:** Weatherization assistance for low-income families is available in Georgia. This assistance is offered through a program administered by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Agency. For information on weatherization assistance go to: [http://](http://www.gefa.ga.gov/)

[www.gefa.ga.gov/](http://www.gefa.ga.gov/)

**Low Income Assistance:** Low income consumers may qualify for assistance with their heating bills through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). It is administered by the Georgia Department of Human Resources who distribute this federal grant money through local community action agencies. Con-

sumers may also be eligible for assistance through other programs sponsored by their local utilities or social service agencies. Information about LIHEAP is available at [http://](http://www.dhr.ga.gov/)

# Employee News

## New Employees

Welcome to the following new Commission employees:

**Steve Roetger**

**Analyst Internal Consultants**

Steve worked in corporate travel management, banking, international food distribution, and entertainment prior to joining the Commission on September 2. He and his wife live in Decatur and have a three year old son. Steve spends his spare time renovating his home.

## Sympathy

Our sympathy goes to **Bruce Morgan** on the passing of his father, Clifford Eugene Morgan on July 22. Funeral Services were held in Sparta on July 24.

The father of former Commission employee **John Cogburn** passed away October 14. John now works for AGL Resources.



## Farewell



**Lillian Johnson** retired from the Commission September 30, 2008 after 34 years of service with the state. Lillian worked as an analyst in the Telecommunications Unit and had worked at the Commission for 30 years.



## Farewell

**Bob Ginn** retired August 27, 2008 after 34 years of service with the Commission. Bob started at the Commission in 1974 in the Transportation Unit as a hearing officer. He finished his career here as a hearing officer for GUPFA and once again



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## Congratulations

Congratulations to **Catelyn McAlister** and **Jan Harkins** as their high school volleyball team won a state championship on October 25. Executive Secretary **Reece McAlister** is the proud father.

Catelyn and Jan play for the Bible Baptist Christian School which captured the Georgia Association of Christian Schools State Volleyball Championship.



# Commission News

## Georgia State Holidays For 2008

**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 21**  
**April 28**  
**May 26**  
**July 4**  
**September 1**  
**October 13**  
**November 11**  
**November 27**  
**November 28**  
**December 25**  
**December 26**

## Commission Calendar



**November**  
 3-Georgia Power hearing  
 4-Administrative Session  
 5-7-Georgia Power hearing  
 11-Veteran's Day Holiday  
 13-Committees  
 18-Administrative Session  
 26-Committees  
 27-28-Holiday  
**December**  
 2-Administrative Session  
 2-3 Georgia Power hearing  
 11-Committees

## Commission Calendar

16-Administrative Session  
 25-26-Holiday  
 31-Committees  
**January 2009**

### 1-New Years Eve

6-Administrative Session  
 12-16-Georgia Power hearing  
 15-Committees  
 20-Administrative Session  
 20-21 Georgia Power hearing  
 29-Committees

### NARUC

#### Annual Convention 2008

November 16-19, 2008  
 New Orleans, LA

#### Winter Meeting 2009

February 15-18, 2009  
 Washington, D.C.

#### Summer Meeting 2009

July 19-22, 2009  
 Seattle, WA

### SEARUC

#### Annual Meeting 2009

June 21-24, 2009  
 Charleston, South Carolina



**GPSC ONLINE:** [psc.state.ga.us](http://psc.state.ga.us)

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**Robert B. Baker, Jr.**  
**H. Doug Everett**  
**Angela Elizabeth Speir**  
**Stan Wise**

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
**Reece McAlister**

