



GPSC News

Spring 2010

Volume 9 Issue 2

Commission Revises Mandatory Phone Book Distribution

- *Mandatory directory distribution no longer required
- *Eighteen communities affected
- *Rule in effect since 1976
- *Customer may request a directory

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The Commission April 20 by a 4-1 vote adopted changes to Commission rules in response to a request from AT&T Georgia that will eliminate mandatory distribution of printed directories to 18 Georgia communities with populations over 50,000. Commission rules currently require telecommunications companies to print and distribute residential telephone directories, commonly known as "white pages." Under the amended rule, for communities with combined populations of greater than 50,000, local carriers will not be obligated to distribute printed residential directories. However, **upon a customer's request**, the local exchange carrier is still required to provide the residential directory free of charge in printed or electronic form. Mandatory directory distribution remains an obligation for those local carriers.

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Legislature Finishes Session, Commission Bill Passes

Georgia lawmakers adjourned the 2010 regular session of the General Assembly on April 29, ending the longest running General Assembly since 1889. They approved the 2011 Budget on the final day of the session, a budget that is about \$4 billion less than the FY 2009 budget passed just over two years ago. For the Commission, it was a successful session as House Bill 1233 passed both chambers and is awaiting Governor Sonny Perdue's signature. From all indications, the Governor will sign the measure. AS usual there was other legislation affecting the Commission. Senate Bill 415 won approval on the final day of the session and will give the Commission regulatory authority over emergency point to multi-point warning systems. This is a new area of regulation for the Commission.

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Legislative News

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Lawmakers also approved House Bill 396 which requires the Commission to distribute information packets regarding the laws on the distribution and possession of alcoholic beverages by underage persons to applicants for limousine certification.

Lawmakers accomplished their only mandated job, that of passing a balance state budget, on the final day. Each chamber approved the conference committee report on House Bill 948, which sets state spending for the 2011 fiscal year which begins July 1, 2010 and ends June 30, 2011.



The spending plan calls for spending \$17.8 billion in state funds, which is nearly \$4 billion less than the state budget passed just two years ago.

For the Commission, the budget is about \$1.2 million less than our 2009 spending levels. Our authorized budget is set at just over \$9.1 million including federal funds.

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, 2010.

This was the last legislative session for a large number of statewide elected officials and legislators including Governor Sonny Perdue who can not seek re-election, and House Majority Leader Jerry Keen who is not seeking re-election. Representative John Lunsford who carried our legislation, H.B. 1233, has also decided to retire from the legislative arena.

Two lawmakers have left the legislature to seek the PSC seat being vacated by Commissioner Robert Baker. Senator John Douglas of Conyers and Representative Jeff May of Monroe have qualified for the July 20 Republican primary. A runoff would be held on August 10.

Atlanta Gas Light Files Rate Increase Request

The Commission is reviewing the Atlanta Gas Light Company (AGLC) request for an increase in its base rates filed with the Commission on May 3. Following three rounds of hearings beginning in August of this year, the Commission will issue a decision on the request in November 2010.

According to the Company's filing they are seeking an annual increase of \$54.1 million in



Commission staff receives the Atlanta Gas Light rate case filing

revenues or about a \$3.00 per month increase in the monthly base charge for the average residential customer in the AGLC delivery area. The Company is also seeking an increase in its return on equity (ROE) from 10.90% to 11.25%. The Commission decided the last AGLC rate case on June 10, 2005 at which time the Commission froze the Company's base rates until April 30, 2010. The rate case is under Docket 31647.

Phone Book Rule

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ers serving communities with a combined population of less than 50,000. The amended rule requires local exchange companies to provide notice to affected customers prior to discontinuing the distribution of residential directories.

The affected communities are:

Albany
Athens
Atlanta
Augusta-Harlem
Austell-Douglasville-Hiram-Mableton-Powder Springs
Cherokee-Pickens Counties
Clayton-Fayette-Henry Counties
Columbus-Hamilton
Cumming-Forsyth-Roswell-
Alpharetta
Gwinnett County

Henry County
Lake Oconee-Reynolds Plantation
Macon-Forsyth
Marietta
Savannah
Warner Robins
West Georgia

Commission Joins Governor to Proclaim April Dig Safely Month

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue on April 1 proclaimed April 2010 as Dig Safely Month in Georgia. During a ceremony at the State Capitol, Governor Perdue presented a proclamation to representatives of the Commission, Georgia 811, Georgia Utility Contractors Association, Georgia Power, Atlanta Gas Light, AT&T and other organizations involved in the prevention of damage to Georgia's underground utility infrastructure. The Commission is charged with the enforcement of the state's underground utilities damage prevention programs. The Commission's program is rated one



of the top five in the nation and serves as a model for other states to follow in reducing damages to underground utilities. The Commission works to educate excavators and utilities in order to avoid accidents that can cause expensive and often dan-

gerous damage to buried utilities. **Commission Chairman Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr.** said, "We are joining the Governor and all interested groups in working collectively toward a common goal to prevent damages and personal injuries from occurring to the state's underground utility facilities. In addition, we work to prevent the interruption of utility service as well. Since the passage of the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act in 2000, the state has built a damage prevention program second to none" *(Continued on page 5)*

Commissioner Baker Announces Retirement from the Commission

Commissioner Robert B. Baker, Jr., the longest serving member of the Commission, has decided not to seek re-election for another six-year term. Baker has served on the Commission since January 1993 and is completing his third term. He was the first Republican in Georgia to win a statewide elec-

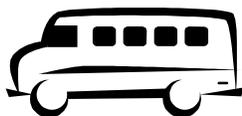


tion since Reconstruction. He is looking for other opportunities." Baker grew up in DeKalb County and attended DeKalb County public schools. He went on to graduate from Oglethorpe University with honors and received his law degree from the University of Georgia. "It's a difficult decision," Baker said, "after 18 years it's time to do something new and I'm going to be looking for other opportunities."

Commission Approves Van Service

The Commission April 6 granted emergency authority to a Clayton County passenger van carrier who will provide transportation service to residents of Clayton County. The Commission approved a Class B Passenger Certificate Temporary Emergency Authority for Bisola Ige, doing business as South-

side Transportation (Southside). Southside has complied with state law and Commission rules for 60 days and will allow Southside to operate while it seeks a Permanent Certificate of Authority from the Commission. In granting the Emergency Authority, the Commission has verified that Southside will provide proof of insurance, a background criminal investigation and safety inspections. According to their application, Southside will operate two 15 passenger vans and will charge \$2.00 per person per



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Commission Reduces Atmos Energy Rate Increase

The Commission on March 29 voted 4 to 1 to reduce the Atmos Energy request for an increase in its base rates. The Commission decision lowers the Company's requested increase in revenue by approximately \$800,000 per year. The Company filed a request on October 1, 2009 for a \$3.8 million annual increase in its base rates. Other terms of the decision in-

clude:

- Increases residential customer monthly bill by approximately \$3.
- Increases the Company's revenue by \$3 million annually.
- Places new rates in effect on April 1, 2010
- Sets the Company's rate of return on equity at 10.7%

The Commission held three rounds of hearings at which the Company, Commission staff, other interested parties, also known as intervenors, and the public were allowed to present testimony and evidence in support of their positions in this case. The Commis-

sion heard from 14 witnesses during the hearings. The Commission also held a public comment meeting in Gainesville and heard from a number of public speakers.

The Commission last approved an increase in Atmos Energy's base rates in 2008.

Atmos Energy serves approximately 57,000 customers in Columbus and Gainesville, Georgia.



Commission Issues Decision in Georgia Power Fuel Cost Recovery Case

The Commission on March 17 approved a settlement in the Georgia Power Company request for an increase in the Company's fuel cost recovery rates. The decision means a lower increase in the monthly fuel rate, as well as other mechanisms to keep future fuel costs in check.

Consumers will see a lower fuel rate than originally proposed by the Company. Georgia Power customers using an average of 1000 kilowatt hours a month will see an increase

of \$5.59 in their bills beginning April 1, 2010.

The agreement contains a number of items that will benefit consumers. By collecting the under collected balance of fuel costs, fuel that Georgia Power has already purchased, over a 42-month period beginning April 1, the



Company will be able to take advantage of lower interest costs and lower fuel costs to bring the balance down to zero as quickly as possible. The current under collection balance is now \$683 million. The Commission approved the 42-month collection period on a motion by **Commissioner Doug Everett**. The agreement establishes a mechanism to keep future under

collected balances from reaching the huge balances which have accumulated in the past. The Interim Fuel Rate (IFR) will allow the Company to increase the fuel rate should the under collected balance reach more than \$75 million of the projected fuel budget. However the IFR can not exceed 10 percent of the current fuel rate and may not be adjusted more than three times in one year. Any

increases in fuel rates through the IFR are subject to Staff review and Commission approval. A request for an increase in the fuel cost is not the same as a request for an increase in base rates. Georgia law allows electric utilities to recover their fuel costs, prudently incurred, on a dollar for dollar basis (O.C.G.A. 46-2-26). The utilities are not

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Congressional Staff Visits Utility Protection Center

The Utilities Protection Center hosted federal pipeline safety officials and Congressional staff as well as our own Commission staff on February 18 for a tour of the UPC 811 call Center in Duluth.

The visitors also toured the Colonial Pipeline facility in Alpharetta.

The group included Department of Transportation Associate Administrator Jeff Wiese and Congressional and Governmental Affairs Liaison Patricia Klingner.



Congressional staff, federal pipeline officials and Commission staff outside the UPC Facility in Duluth

Dig Safely Month

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in the nation.” Chairman McDonald added, “For those states who do not currently have a damage prevention program, I would issue a challenge to follow Georgia’s lead and begin such a program, it is the right thing to do.” This “one call” system is free to contractors and excavators as well as homeowners and helps all excavators comply with the law.



Commission Begins Hearings on Georgia Power Integrated Resource Plan

The Commission April 13 started its triennial review of the Georgia Power Company 2010 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP).

This review is required by law and is the utility’s long-range plans for and forecasts of the



state’s electric power needs for the next three years.

Additional hearings are scheduled for May 18-19, 2010 and June 10-11, 2010.

The Commission is scheduled to issue a decision on the Georgia Power IRP at its regular Administrative Session on July 6, 2010.

Georgia Power Fuel Cost Decision

(Continued from page 4)

allowed to make a profit on their fuel costs. The Commission can also, on its own request, require a utility to file a fuel cost docket.

Georgia law also requires the Commission to issue a decision on the Company’s request within 90 days of the Company’s filing. Otherwise, the

Company’s request goes into effect. The statutory deadline for this docket was March 15, 2010. The Commission held a full day of hearings this year on February 22 at which the Company, Commission staff, other interested parties, also known as intervenors, and the public were allowed to present testimony and evidence in support of their posi-

tions in this case. There were five intervenors in this docket representing consumers, commercial and industrial customers. The Commission heard from 13 witnesses during the hearing. At the conclusion of the hearings, the Company and the Public Interest Advocacy Staff reached

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New Direct Deposit Policy

In an effort to maximize the utilization of electronic payments and to minimize the number of paper checks issued by the State, the State Accounting Office (SAO) has issued a new policy on payroll direct deposit.

Please be aware that this policy applies to all employees paid by the PeopleSoft HCM central payroll system administered by the State Accounting Office therefore all PSC employees are affected. A few key points of the new policy are:

- All current and future employees are affected
- Current employees have until June 1, 2010 to enroll.
- An exemption process is avail-

able with several caveats

- Employees that request and receive an exemption from SAO will have paper checks **mailed ON PAYDAY from SAO**

- The new policy contains several pages of 'Frequently asked Questions and Answers' that are very informative

NO Action is required for the employees currently receiving their pay by direct deposit unless you are changing financial institutions. Any questions concerning this direct deposit policy should be sent to Ivy Ferris at iferris@sao.ga.gov or Monique Simmons at mmsimmons@sao.ga.gov.

Vogle Monitoring Hearings; Judge Rules in Vogle Lawsuit

The Commission will begin the second set of hearings to review Plant Vogle Construction costs on May 26 and 27. Under the Commission's order in this Docket 29849, Georgia Power must file semi-annual reports on the progress of the multi-billion dollar construction project.

On April 30, Fulton County Judge Wendy Shoob issued a bench ruling that sent the Plant Vogle certification case back to the Commission for additional findings of fact.

Clayton County Van

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trip. He must seek permanent authority from the Commission in order to continue his service.

Commissioner Chuck Eaton, who chairs the Commission's Transportation Committee said, "While this carrier will not replace C-TRAN, the Commission has given Southside the opportunity to step in right away and meet some of the needs of Clayton

County commuters. The Commission is acting within its emergency powers to attract private businesses to help fill the void left by the cancellation of C-TRAN service. The Commission hopes the emergency certificate will fill the needs of those who rely on public transportation for so many things such as jobs, healthcare and grocery shopping."

Georgia Power

(Continued from page 5)

agreement on a stipulation – or negotiated settlement – on the issues in this docket. Stipulations are often used to settle contested cases in a way that benefits all parties in the proceeding.



Commission Authorizes Funds for Natural Gas Assistance

The Commission May 4 unanimously approved the distribution of up to \$500,000 in matching funds from the Universal Service Fund (USF) to the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) for the Fresh Start Program. The monies will be used to provide assistance to low income natural gas customers in

the Atlanta Gas Light Company (AGLC) service area to pay their bills and/or deposits.

The Commission's approval of the USF disbursement will enable DHS to apply for federal matching grants under the Fresh Start program which has been established to assist low income natural gas customers in the AGLC

territory. Fresh Start is a federal program that provides one-time crisis assistance payments for needy families. Under the program, 80% of the monies will be federal funds, 10% will be USF funds, 5-10% will be paid by the Natural Gas Marketers and the recipient will

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Employee News Sympathy

Our condolences go out to the following Commission colleagues on the loss of loved ones:

Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr. on the passing of his wife, Sunny Nivens McDonald February 27. The funeral was held March 4 in Cumming, Georgia

Margie Conley on the passing her mother, Mary Lewis, on April 7. The funeral was held on April 11 in Newnan, Georgia.

Former employee **Sheila Collins** on the passing of her husband Donald on March 28. The funeral was held April 1.



Congratulations

Sallie Kempton Tanner, along with her husband Stephen on the birth of their first child, George Tanner, on March 24. George weighed in at seven pounds and three ounces. All are doing fine.



William Upshaw and wife on the birth of their second child, Nathaniel Upshaw, on March 24. Landon weighed six pounds 11 ounces and was 20 and 1/4 inches long.



Monique Andrews and her husband Abe on the birth of Malachi Lewis Andrews on April 30. The new arrival weighed in at 8 lbs and 8 oz and his length was 19.5 inches. This is their first child.



Welcome Back

We welcome back **Dennis Sewell** and **Victoria Taylor** to the Commission.

Dennis returns after a one year tour of active duty with the military in Afghanistan. Dennis is in the internal consultants section. Dennis has been with the Commission since 1987.

Victoria is back after a leave of absence to pursue graduate education. Victoria works in the internal consultants section. She has been with the Commission since 2003.

Commission Authorizes Funds for Low Income Assistance

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pay 0-5%.

The Commission's decision limits the initial disbursement to DHS to \$100,000 but authorizes up to \$500,000 in disbursements from the USF upon proper showing of need. The Commission's decision requires DHS to submit monthly reports detailing the amount of funds received and how they are spent and stipulates that the

USF funds can only be spent on customers in the AGLC service territory.

The Universal Service Fund is a fund established under the Natural Gas Deregulation Act of 1997. The law authorizes the Commission to order disbursements from the USF to assist low income consumers in times of emergency as determined by the Commission.

Commission News



Commission Calendar



Georgia State Holidays For 2010

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's Birthday
Washington's Birthday
Christmas

January 1
January 18
April 26
May 31
July 2
September 6
October 11
November 11
November 25
November 26
December 23
December 24

May 2010

4-Administrative Session
 13-Committees
 18-Administrative Session
 18-19-IRP Hearings
 26-27-Vogle Review Hearings
 27-Committees

June 2010

1-Administrative Session
 10-Committees
 10-11-IRP Hearings
 15-Administrative Session

Commission Calendar

July 2010

1- Committees
 2-Holiday
 6-Administrative Session
 15-Committees
 20-Administrative Session
 22-Vogle Review Hearings
 July 29-Committees

August 2010

3-Administrative Session
 10-12-AGLC Hearings
 12-Committees

NARUC

Summer Meeting 2010

July 18-21, 2010
 Sacramento, California

Annual Convention 2009

November 15-18, 2010
 Atlanta, Georgia

Winter Meeting 2011

February 13-17, 2011
 Washington, D.C.

SEARUC

Annual Meeting 2010

June 21-24, 2010
 Point Clear, Alabama



GPSC ONLINE: psc.state.ga.us

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