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Fort Valley

Utility Commission

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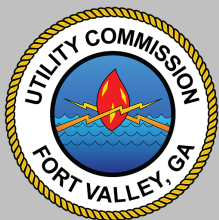
Vice Chairman

Alre' Horton

Linda Johnson

Mayor Barbara B. Williams

*The Commission meets the second
Monday of each month at 6:00
p.m. at McLean Water Plant*



July 2018

Editor: Martha McAfee

Commission Opens New Customer Engagement Center



The Fort Valley Utility Commission has relocated several departments to its new Customer Engagement Center. Located at 902 Knoxville Street, the center is the home for Customer Service, Finance, Information Technology, and Metering staff. The Center also serves as the new location for customers to visit to pay bills, get information, and to start or stop services.

"We are very excited about bringing the Customer Engagement Center on line," stated Craig Mims, General Manager/CEO. "This center enhances our ability to provide a much better service to our customers as well as provides a more secure workplace setting for our employees," further stated Mims.

The new center has a drive thru option for payments only with an entrance on Anthoine Street. "We want to give our customers as many conveniences as possible," stated Cathy Johnson, Director of Financial and Administrative Services.

The Center was made possible after the Commission acquired the 2,600 square foot unoccupied building that was formally used as a medical office building. "We saw an opportunity that not only served the needs of the Commission but also made great strides toward improving the aesthetics of the neighborhood," said Mims.

The Commission celebrated the opening of the new center with a ribbon cutting celebration and the center officially opened in April 2018.



From the General Manager's Desk.....



Fact: Fort Valley Utility Commission is a \$25+ Million a Year Business.

It is easy sometimes for some to lose sight of this fact because of the way public utility power companies are sometimes viewed but at the Commission, we are business focused with an emphasis on balancing revenues and expenses while maintaining reserves in an amount sufficient enough to sustain us in the unfortunate occasion of a catastrophic event.

We are in the middle of putting together our FY 2019 budget which is by no means an easy task. There are always limited resources available to accomplish all that needs to be done but through an intense prioritization process, we will get there. Our goal is to provide quality and reliable products and services to our ratepayers and citizens at the most economically feasible price.

The Commission has consistently been able to keep residential electric rates among the lowest in the state and will continue to try to maintain that status. As the balance available in our Municipal Competitive Trust Fund (MCT) dwindles, this task will become increasingly difficult. The MCT was established in 1999 when the Commission combined some of its funds with other MEAG entities and created a pool of resources to prepare for impending deregulation of the electric industry. After the threat of deregulation passed, the Commission opted not to withdraw all of the funds immediately but to leave the funds invested in the trust fund to be used in subsequent budgets. FY 2019 will see the end of the availability of the MCT funds and replacement resources must be identified.

Staff members are diligently working to find ways to maintain the solvency of the Commission. These measures include exploring ways to decrease operating expenses and a continuous reevaluation of our rate structure and other revenue sources. A Cash Positive Committee was appointed with the specific purpose of evaluating our internal processes to identify cost savings and revenue enhancements. We aggressively seek economic development opportunities by maintaining positive relationships with several economic development partners and bidding on Customer Choice opportunities. We also take advantage of economic development training and networking sessions.

“ We aggressively seek economic development opportunities by maintaining positive relationships with our economic development partners...”

We take the finances of the Commission seriously and are fiscally responsible with the Commission assets. Measures are in place to ensure that funds are used in the manner in which they are intended. The auditing firm of Butler, Williams, and Wyche recently released an opinion letter regarding our FY 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The letter confirms that our financial records are clean and that there are no irregularities in our finances nor the methods by which we account for them. This is indicative of just how serious we are about our fiscal responsibility and transparency and we pledge to continue to operate in this manner.

Economic Development

Georgia Academy for Economic Development

The Board of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development announced Peach County graduates from the 2018 Region 6 Multi-Day Training Program. Class participants represented a number of professional and non-professional economic development fields, including elected officials, public servants, business leaders, educators, and social service providers from 11 counties in Middle Georgia. The Academy provided each of the graduates an opportunity to gain a unique understanding of the complexities of economic and community development on the local, regional, and state levels.

Fort Valley Utility Commission representatives participating in the Academy were Executive Assistant to the General Manager Penny Burch and Martha McAfee who serves as the Commission's Human Resources/Key Accounts Manager. "We are serious about and dedicated to being an integral part of economic development efforts in this area," said the Commission's General Manager/CEO Craig Mims. "We strategically plan to participate in trainings and networking sessions as they present themselves in an effort to better position the Commission for expanded economic development opportunities," further stated Mims.

Created in 1993, the Academy assembles a cross section of economic development professionals and resources to provide this training in all twelve service delivery regions in Georgia. Since its organization, the Academy has provided training for thousands of professional and non-professional economic developers around the state, and since 1998 the Academy has been offered annually in all twelve regions of the state.

"One of the goals for the multi-day regional Academies is to encourage multi-county cooperation," says Corinne Thornton, Director of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development. "Many times the participants discover the issues facing their community are the same as those facing other communities in their region, and can then combine limited resources to address the issue."

The Academy's multi-day program, taught one day a month over a four-month period, includes training in the basics of economic and community development, plus specialized segments on business recruitment and retention, tourism product development, downtown development, planning, and other essentials for community success. In addition, the curriculum features specific leadership skills such as consensus building, ethics in public service, collaborative leadership and other segments needed for effective community leadership in economic development.



Annual Legislative Event at the Georgia Capitol

Every year various organizations host members of the General Assembly and state elected officials at what is called an Annual Legislative Event. The purpose of this event is to give members of these organizations an opportunity to connect with Georgia's elected officials and to alert the officials of policies that are essential to local organizations and the communities served.

Recognizing the fact that economic development is a key component in growing our utility, the Utility Commission attended the Annual Legislative Event with the Georgia Economic Development Association (GEDA). The Utility Commission was in the same room with Senate President Butch Miller, Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, and Attorney General Chris Carr who spoke briefly to GEDA and attending municipalities about what to expect during the 2018 Legislative Session. The Utility Commission also had an opportunity to receive policy updates first hand and come together with neighboring cities on some of the same issues.

The Commission kept a close watch on several bills in the House and Senate this year and the outcome was favorable. As your public power provider, the Utility Commission will continue to attend legislative events related to economic development or public power to remain on the forefront of new policies or bills that affect the community.

Contract Work

The Utility Commission has several projects in progress designed to improve, expand, and/or protect the infrastructure or improve the reliability of the services provided to our customers. Analysis is always carefully conducted to determine the best way to complete projects in a timely, efficient, and safe manner. For that reason, the Utility Commission sometimes hires contractors to assist in the completion of projects. When using this avenue, projects are bid in a Request for Proposal process and sealed bids are accepted by a certain date. These contractors are then vetted to determine quality of work, reliability, and value pricing.

Here are some of the benefits of sometimes hiring contractors:.

Expertise: Some projects include extremely specialized work such as substation build-outs, high-pressure gas main work and waste water lift stations. To ensure that the best expertise available is utilized, the Commission may hire a contractor to focus on very specialized work.

Time/Schedules: The Utility Commission often has its hands full ensuring that each of our customers is receiving quality and reliable services. Due to this, the Commission may hire a contractor for a project to ensure that deadlines can be met as well as continue to provide quality and timely service to all customers.



Warranty: General contractors usually provide a warranty for work completed and take responsibility to fix any issues that may arise. Using general contractors for certain work maintains the integrity of warranties and releases the Commission from responsibility and cost.

Saves Money: A contractor sometimes has the experience and knowledge to do the job the right way quicker and more efficiently.

Licensing and Insurance: Highly specialized contractors bring to the table the necessary licensing and insurance. The state board ensures that the contractor is following all the rules and regulations applicable to the area. Reputable contractors have liability insurance and compensation for

workers in case an accident happens, and someone gets hurt on the job. These contractors also encourage high safety standards on site to prevent accidents.

The Commission currently has contractors working on projects such as the Natural Gas Main Extension on Hwy 96 and Tree Trimming along Power lines to ensure the safety and reliability of service. Any questions and/or concerns regarding contractors may be directed to Director of Operations, Angie Luna at (478) 825-7701 or aluna@fvutil.com.

Community Engagement.... Fort Valley Utility Commission Raise Funds for Cancer



The Fort Valley Utility Commission for the third year in a row held an event to raise funds for cancer. The event dubbed “**White Out Cancer**” dance was held downtown Fort Valley at the Austin Theater and raised over **\$7,000**. In honor of those battling cancer and in memory of those who have succumbed to the disease, attendees wore white attire with a hint of color representing the various forms of cancer. Candles were placed on the tables in honor of or in memory of loved ones.

“We did not want the fact that the Relay for Life event is no longer held in our service area to stop our commitment to raising funds for the American Cancer Society and other cancer support agencies. So many of us have been touched personally by this dreaded disease,” stated the Commission’s General Manager/CEO Craig Mims.

A total of 22 sponsorships were secured from various organizations, companies, and individuals. “We were super excited about the event this year and the increase in the number of those who committed to supporting the event,” stated Martha McAfee, HR/Key Accounts Manager. McAfee serves as chairperson of the employees’ Community Engagement Committee and is a 9-year breast cancer survivor. “I make it a point each year to celebrate my cancer free birthday and have celebrated in conjunction with this event for the past three years,” further stated McAfee.

The sponsors were acknowledged at the event, on social media, and on a monitor located in the Commission’s Customer Engagement Center lobby.



Commission Chairman Dollie Horton and
Fort Valley Department of Public Safety Fire Lieutenant Melvin Oates

"White Out Cancer" Fundraiser Sponsors



Corporate Sponsor



Corporate Sponsor



Dollie Horton



Star McGhee & Friends



Craig Mims



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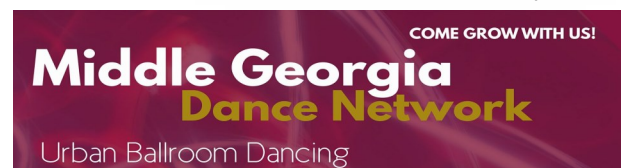
Frankie and Gloria McAfee



Marchaz McAfee & Davette Taylor



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New Software Offers Enhanced On-line Options

Fort Valley Utility Commission has transitioned to a new finance software system that gives customers *secure* access to account information. Through the system customers can now:

- ⇒ Pay Utility Bill **
- ⇒ Pay Multiple Bills in One Payment
- ⇒ Save Payment Method for Future Payments
- ⇒ View Consumption History
- ⇒ View Address Information
- ⇒ Review Account Information
- ⇒ Sign up for e-Billing
- ⇒ Manage Multiple Accounts
- ⇒ Submit Service Requests
- ⇒ Sign up for reminders

**** Payments are processed through Municipal Online Payments, a separate company not affiliated with FVUC. The company adds a \$1.50 per transaction service fee that goes directly to Municipal Online Payments.**

To use our on-line portal, visit our website at www.fvutil.com, and click "Pay Bill Online" tab on the left side of menu. You will be redirected to our payment portal. Once here, select **Utility Billing** from available services.

A customer has the option of registering an account or completing a quick pay. To register an account, click login and proceed with entering an email address and creating a password. A link will be sent to the email for verification and validation.

Once the account is verified and validated the customer has the option to add utility account(s). Account numbers are located at the top right of the billing statement (include the dashes, example 012-03456-07).

To register an account, a customer will be required to enter the last amount paid on the account.

No login is required to complete a Quick Pay. But the account number (including dashes) and the last amount paid is required.

Questions regarding the on-line portal and assistance with setting up accounts can be obtained by calling Customer Service at

(478) 825-7701

Option 3.

One of these ladies in Customer Service/ Billing will be glad to help!



Danyelle George of the auditing firm Butler, Williams & Wyche presenting Chairman Dollie Horton with notice of Commission's clean audit report.



Weatherization

Approximately one half of a household's energy use can be contributed to heating and cooling it and water heating accounts for approximately 18%. This makes these two items alone some of the largest energy expenses in any home.

FVUC's Weatherization Program is designed to help customers reduce energy usage to help better manage these expenses.

"We have the final pieces in place and have started accepting applications for weatherization assistance," said the Commission's General Manager/CEO Craig Mims.

The first stage of the program is to have an energy audit completed. The audits will be conducted at no cost to the customer. Several Commission employees have received the necessary training to conduct the audits. "To reduce the cost of implementing the program, we wanted to have qualified energy auditors in-house," further stated Mims.

The second phase of the program will be to provide assistance to qualified customers for the purchase and possibly installation of items to help weatherize the home. This will include items such as LED light bulbs, weather strips, caulking, air filters, and insulation. Depending on the magnitude of the project, the items will be installed by Commission employees or by a local contractor.

Applications are available at the Customer Engagement Center located at 902 Knoxville Street and are available on our Customer Service page on our website. Visit www.fvutil.com.



Weatherization Program

Free Energy Audits
& Tips
on more energy
efficient home

Do you want
to save money
on your bills?

Do you have
a home that
needs
weatherization?

Will provide energy efficiency kits to customers meeting certain income guidelines.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO
RECEIVE AN APPLICATION:

CALL: 478.825.7701

EMAIL: customerservice@fvutil.com

Completed applications may be emailed or brought to our customer engagement center at 902 Knoxville St.



NEED ASSISTANCE?

DID YOU KNOW?

DISCOUNT

65+ Discount

To qualify for the 65+ discount:

- you must show proof of age
- account must be in your name
- you must reside at the location

12 MONTH AVERAGE PAYMENT PLAN

"Levelized Billing"

To qualify for the 12 Month Average Payment Plan you must have:

- resided at your current residence for at least one year
- have a zero balance
- have a good payment history (no late fees or returned checks for the previous 6 months.)

When you move or close the account, you will be responsible for any balance due if applicable.

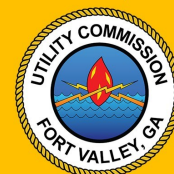


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Financing
Available

Need a new NATURAL GAS stove, furnace or another major home appliance?

Ask Customer Service
about our Main Street On-Bill
Finance Program
478.825.7701

Loan terms up to 60 months
Monthly payment added to your bill



2017 Annual Water Quality Report - Fort Valley Utility Commission Water Quality Excels

The Fort Valley Utility Commission is committed to providing customers with safe, healthy, and reliable supply of high quality drinking water. Water tests conducted over the past year using sophisticated equipment and advanced procedures show that Fort Valley's water continually meets or surpasses state and federal standards for drinking water. This annual water quality report details where our water comes from, what it contains, and other information.

Important Information About the Safety of Your Drinking Water (A Message from Craig Mims, General Manager/CEO)

We are pleased to report to you that the drinking water supplied by the Fort Valley Utility Commission is safe. Drinking water in Fort Valley consistently exceeds safe drinking water health standards. As health scientists learn more about our environment and the effect of substances in the environment on human health, new standards will continue to be set for drinking water. Fort Valley continues to add new technology in order to be able to meet further standards. All drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some substances. All water sources pass over the surface of the land or through the ground. The water dissolves naturally occurring minerals and materials and can pick up substances relating to the presence of animals or from human activity. Substances that may be present in source water:

- Biological - may come from human, agriculture, or wildlife sources
- Inorganic - can be natural, from storm run-off, or from industrial or domestic wastewater discharges.
- Pesticides and herbicides - may come from agriculture, storm run-off or residential use.
- Organic chemicals - may come from industrial or domestic processes, storm run-off, and septic systems.
- Radioactive materials - can be naturally occurring or the result of mining or other human activities.

To ensure tap water is safe to drink, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prescribes regulations that limit the amount of certain substances in water provided by public water systems.

Where does our water come from?

The Fort Valley Utility Commission gets its water from the Tuscaloosa aquifer, which is approximately 500 feet below the surface. This aquifer has, so far, provided the City with a safe and dependable supply of water even in the driest years. For information on the Well-Head Protection Plan, contact the Utility Commission's Water Plant at (478) 825-5482.

Treatment Process:

The water is disinfected with chlorine to make it biologically safe. The pH is adjusted by adding sodium hydroxide. Fluoride is added to help prevent dental cavities. Phosphate is added to enhance corrosion control.

What is in our water?

More than 7,500 tests are conducted annually at the Fort Valley Utility Commission's Drinking Water Lab. These tests monitor tap water for micro-organisms, minerals, and organic substances that could cause disease or other adverse health effects. Testing is done for contaminants, including coliform bacteria, metals, nitrates, and pesticides.

The water in the distribution system is tested on a regular basis. Five water system samples are collected each week. A total of twenty samples are tested each month as required by the EPD to ensure that the drinking water is safe for consumption.

The data presented in this report is from the most recent testing done in accordance with State and Federal regulations. **The table on the next page lists only the regulated substances that were found. Our test results are below the levels allowed by EPA in public drinking water.**

Terms and Abbreviations:

Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG): The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL): The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLG as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL): The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbiological contaminants.

Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDLG): The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

Action Level (AL): The concentration of a contaminant that, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirement that a water system must follow.

N/A: not applicable

PPM: parts per million or milligrams per liter (mg/l) – one part per million corresponds to one minute in two years or a single penny in \$10,000.

PPB: Parts per billion, or micrograms per liter – one part per billion corresponds to one minute in 2,000 years or a single penny in \$10,000,000

(dw): Drinking water.

(a): Fluoride is added in treatment to bring the natural level to the EPA optimum of 1 part per million (see definition of PPM).

(b): Water from the treatment plant does not contain lead or copper. However, under EPA test protocol, water is tested at the tap. Tap tests show that where a customer may have lead pipes or lead-soldered copper lines, the water is not corrosive. This means the amount of lead or copper absorbed by the water is limited to safe levels.

2017 Annual Water Quality Report - cont'd

Drinking Water Analysis

| Substances Tested and Detected | Unit | Goal MCLG | Maximum Allowed MCL | Amount Detected | Is it safe? (Does it meet standards?) | Probable Source |
|--------------------------------|------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Fluoride (a) | PPM | 4 | 4 | 0.87 | Yes | Water additive that promotes strong teeth |
| Copper (b) | PPB | 1,300 | AL = 1,300 | 97 | Yes | Corrosion of household plumbing systems |
| Lead (b) | PPB | 0 | AL = 15 | 1.4 | Yes | Corrosion of household plumbing systems |

| Substance Tested & Detected | Unit | MRD L | MRDL G | Amount Detected | Range of Detection (Report Year) | Is it safe? (Does it meet standards?) | Source |
|-----------------------------|------|-------|--------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Chlorine | PPM | 4 | 4 | 0.83 | 0.36 – 1.21 | Yes | Water additive used to disinfect drinking water |

Additional Lead Information

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The Fort Valley Utility Commission is responsible for providing high quality drinking water but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791 or at www.epa.gov/safewater/lead.

Cryptosporidium

Cryptosporidium is a protozoan parasite that is common in source water. Cryptosporidium can cause symptoms including diarrhea, nausea, and/or stomach cramps. Cryptosporidium has never been found in the drinking water that goes to your tap.

Notice to Immuno-compromised People

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised people (such as those with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, people who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune disorders, some older adults and infants) can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about the drinking water from their healthcare providers.

EPA and the Centers for Disease Control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbiological contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791 or www.epa.gov/drink.

Additional Testing and Research

The EPA has required the Utility Commission and hundreds of U.S. water systems to participate in a major testing program Information Collection Rule (ICR). The ICR is intended to provide EPA information about the occurrence of chemical by-products used in disinfecting, plus information about disease-causing pathogens (microorganisms). The data on how public water supply systems control the chemical by-products and pathogens will be used to revise drinking water standards.

Additional Information Sources:

Web sites with information about water quality: www.epa.gov/ow www.awwa.org www.gaepd.org www.amwa.net

Please join us in making our decisions.

We encourage and invite public interest and participation in the decision-making that affects drinking water. The Fort Valley Utility Commission holds regularly scheduled meetings at 6:00 p.m. on the second Monday of every month. The meetings are open to the public and are held at City Hall in downtown Fort Valley located at 204 West Church Street. The Fort Valley Utility Commission business office is open daily except for weekends and holidays. Lobby hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Customer Service telephone number is (478) 825-7701, option 3. The Drinking Water Quality Lab, and emergency after hours, telephone number is (478) 825-5482.

The Power to Choose

Georgia's Customer Choice Program is Encouraging Economic Development Across the State

By Kenna Simmons

When Pure Flavor, a Canadian company that grows greenhouse vegetables, went looking for 103 acres to build a new high-tech, \$105-million, 75-acre greenhouse complex, Peach County was not on its list. Some 300 other sites were.

But the Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG), an organization serving the municipal power companies, was involved in recruiting the company to Georgia along with the state Department of Economic Development. And they knew a couple of things: The project had some unique requirements, like needing its own power substation on site. The Peach County site had a transmission line running through it. It had a committed group of local leaders who were working together. And since the location was in Georgia, it could offer Customer Choice.

That's a unique state law that lets large power users – with connected loads of 900KW or larger – make a one-time choice about their electric supplier. The choices are one of the 52 municipal companies, one of the 42 electric membership cooperatives or EMCs, or Georgia Power, the investor-owned utility. Because the customer has a choice, it can negotiate for the best rate and services – something that can give the state an advantage in the economic development game.

"Companies like it because when they are building in Georgia, they do get a one-time choice, so it helps them become more competitive," says Walter West, chief operating officer at ECG. "It helps them lower the electric rate, which makes it easier for a new plant to become profitable."

Or a new greenhouse. Craig Mims, general manager and CEO of the Fort Valley Utilities Commission, which serves parts of Peach and Crawford counties, recalls that once ECG suggested the Peach County site might be a good fit for Pure Flavor, then he sat down with his staff and said, "This may be a long shot, but we really need to figure out how we can tailor our services to fit the needs of this project." When the time came, he says, "We were able to lead with the services we provide against their particular needs, and we actually got their attention."

Over the next 18 months, the utility worked with its partners, Pure Flavor and its consultants to make adjustments and show the extent of the services it could offer. (Along with electricity, for example, Fort Valley also provides natural gas, water and telecom services, and worked with the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia to provide additional natural gas supply.) Consultants for Pure Flavor specifically mentioned the advantage of having three power providers competing for the business, and in the end the company chose the Fort Valley utility.

It's a big win. "Huge for Peach County," says Mims of the investment and the more than 200 jobs that will be created over four to five years. "I don't know that they've had a \$105-million investment in this community in the last 25 or 30 years."

And it's a win for the state, too. "In other states ... the piece of dirt you pick for your new facility [means] you're bound to whoever the supplier is for that particular piece of dirt," says Dennis Chastain, president and CEO of the Georgia Electric Membership Corp.

(Georgia EMC, the statewide association representing the EMCs). That means the investor-owned utility is only marketing the properties it serves, while the co-ops and cities do the same with their properties.

"In Georgia, we all market the entire state," Chastain says. "We market the whole state. Georgia Power does the same, and Electric Cities does the same. You don't have us, in essence, competing with each other on the front end when it comes to trying to steer a project to a particular area. We're much more customer focused, [so] when a project comes into the state Department of Economic Development, we all work together."

It's an important tool for economic development, says Kline Perry, Georgia Power's Customer Choice manager. "First, large business prospects see that Georgia utilities are willing partners in trying to bring them into the state. Then, these prospects also know that those same electric suppliers have the ability to compete with each other to win their business. That's a valuable consideration for these large companies [that] want to ensure they are getting the most value and best reliability for their energy dollar."



Tailored Services: Craig Mims, CEO and general manager of the Fort Valley Utility Commission

The Power to Choose continued....

One of the three utility provider groups will usually take the lead, and there's no real rhyme or reason to who is on point at this stage. "A lot of times it's relationships, or who at a trade show might have talked to that particular prospect," Chastain says. "We always make sure the prospect knows there's a possibility of Customer Choice for them. We don't guarantee [it], because a lot of factors go into it. But we make it known up front that they should investigate the possibility because we think that's a benefit to everybody."

Growing a Bigger Pie

Once a Customer Choice-eligible prospect decides to locate in Georgia and chooses a site, then the individual utilities do compete against one another. But even then, there's a sense that the program lifts all lines, so to speak. More than one person who works with Customer Choice said the same thing: They think Customer Choice has helped Georgia's reputation – and rankings – as a top state in which to do business.

The EMCs are very competitive. Do we win every customer choice opportunity that's out there? No," says Chastain. "[But] the importance of it is that it has helped grow the pie bigger for all of us."

Jobs are the main goal, after all, and more jobs mean more customers. "If a new factory [or company] comes in and somebody got a job – they live on EMC lines. So even if we don't serve that company, we're going to get a benefit from it because that person will have money to pay their power bill to invest back into the community, which helps us all," Chastain says.

Customer Choice had its origins in a 1973 law called the Georgia Territorial Electric Service Act, which assigned exclusive power supply territories "to stop the duplication of lines and to create certainty for customers," says West. Georgia's suppliers of electricity jointly own the transmission lines and power substations across the state.

When the 1973 law was passed, exceptions were made to the assigned areas that included allowing large facilities to choose their power supplier. For a more relatable comparison, West says that facilities that use 900KW or more are the size of a big grocery store or larger. It's a little more complicated than that (see "Customer Choice Explained" on page 50), but generally new facilities get a one-time choice.

Derek Hampton, assistant director of the Cartersville Electric System, one of the state's municipal power providers, says it's a common misconception that the cities or EMCs buy electricity from Georgia Power and resell it. "The cities actually own generation in the same plants where Georgia Power owns generation," Hampton says. "All our power comes from the same transmission system – sometimes from the same substations."

The same is true of the EMCs. In negotiations on Customer Choice projects, Hampton says people are often surprised to find out that Cartersville can offer a comparable rate to Georgia Power.

The Public Service Commission has jurisdiction over any dispute about Customer Choice, says West, and over the years the PSC's decisions have helped clarify the law and set precedent. The intent is for a company or facility to have a one-time choice, but as adaptive reuse has come into play, a substantive change can also trigger Customer Choice.

Take old textile mills, for example. "That was an industrial facility," says West. "Then they closed and developers have gone in. They've gutted some of these places and [redeveloped the facilities]. That's a change of use, and when that's taken place in many cases, that's created another Customer Choice opportunity."

Hampton adds that it's not only about rates, and he takes the opportunity to tout one of the selling points of the municipalities and the co-ops. "We had a Customer Choice conversation with a company from Europe. They were pretty strong in being a member of the community and having a presence here, and they liked the idea of their money staying in the area."

Relationships matter here, too. Jackson EMC, the largest co-op in the state serving the 10-county area of Gwinnett, Hall, Lumpkin, Barrow, Jackson, Banks, Franklin, Madison, Oglethorpe and Clarke counties, has a number of big-name customers. One of those is Kubota, a Japanese manufacturer of tractor products that set up shop in Gainesville in 1988 and chose Jackson as its electric supplier.

It was about the time that Lee Chapman, vice president of marketing, member services and governmental affairs, came on board, as well, and the Kubota relationship "spans my entire career [at Jackson EMC]" Chapman says. "Since then, they have had at least five other opportunities to build very large manufacturing facilities, and each time they've had a choice ... Kubota's chosen Jackson every single time, even in two different communities [Gainesville and Jefferson]."

Customer Choice Explained

In 1973, Georgia passed the Georgia Territorial Electric Service Act, which assigned electric service areas for most customers while allowing competition for some others. Exclusive service areas were assigned to the state's electric membership cooperatives, municipal power systems and Georgia Power.

But customers with new, large manufacturing or commercial loads may get a choice of supplier, depending on circumstances. For example:

The Power to Choose continued.....

- Connected loads of 900KW or greater at the time of initial full operation, located outside municipal limits, can choose any supplier.
- In areas annexed to a municipality after March 29, 1973, loads of 900KW or greater can be served by any electric supplier that owns lines in the municipality.
- In a completely new municipality, loads of 900KW or greater can choose any supplier.

There's also the question of corridor rights, where one supplier's line (below 120,000 volts) crosses another supplier's designated area. Customers inside the corridor may be able to choose the utility that owns the service line.

It's complicated, but the state and its economic development partners, including the utilities, can determine which facilities will qualify and use the prospect of competition as one more selling point in coming to Georgia.

A Different Kind of Choice

When Facebook decided to invest billions to build a 416-acre data center in Newton County, the social media king definitely qualified for Customer Choice. The electrical load will be one of the state's largest. And Facebook had some specific requests – namely, that the huge server farm be powered by renewable energy.

Walton EMC was ready. It already had a community-supported solar program, where the utility constructs and maintains solar farms and customers buy blocks of solar electricity. It costs \$25 per block (two-block limit), and your bill is offset by the amount of power produced by your blocks.

It's been a hit (there's a waiting list to sign up, and the EMC is building a third solar farm), and other utilities across the country see it as a model. The co-op had the expertise to create a plan to install, or contract for installation, hundreds of acres of solar panels on the state's electric grid. Facebook chose Walton to be its supplier, and the amount of electricity needed is enormous – this will be Walton's largest load by far, and in fact one of the largest electrical loads for any co-op in the country.

“The Power to Choose,” by Kenna Simmons, *Georgia Trend* magazine, August 2018.

Utility Commission Prepares for Smart Grid Capabilities

The Utility Commission constantly looks for ways to serve our customers more efficiently. One of the ways that we are looking to improve our efficiency and customer service is to convert our metering infrastructure to a Smart Grid System. What is a Smart Grid System? The textbook definition of a Smart Grid is: “A network that monitors and manages the transport of electricity from the provider to meet the varying electricity demands of the end users (Customers).”

The Utility Commission has researched the benefits of a Smart Grid system and feels that it is important to provide these benefits to our Customers. Some of the benefits are:

Faster response time to customer issues and requests for information

Ability to read meters immediately, without requiring truck-rolls

Ability to pinpoint outages more efficiently and quickly

Empower customers by offering “Pay-As-You-Go” services

Turn On and Turn Off Meters without requiring truck-rolls, for more efficient service

Customers can analyze consumption patterns and become more energy efficient

We are currently working with Tantalus, who created a product called TUNet which allows you to utilize your current outdated infrastructure to create a smart grid system at a fraction of the cost of a full Smart Grid installation. Utilizing our current wireless internet infrastructure, as well as strategically placed Tantalus equipment, we will be able to gain all the benefits of a Smart Grid system without all the cost. The Utility Commission has close to 15,000 meters that currently require truck rolls to be read, serviced, re-read, turned on and off by our Meter Department staff. With the Tantalus Smart Grid system, our Meter Department will be able to provide the most efficient, safe and cost-effective service to our customers possible.

We look forward to providing better service through this project very soon.

Just For Fun!

Water Terminology

Q Y P M Z A N S C H L O R I N A T I O N
 S A N I T A R Y O L A I N J Q K J B V V
 P E Q E E W X E F U Z F S W Y D O J S I
 G R O U N D W A T E R S H E D R I Y T B
 U A S B I O K D C A T C H M E N T B J V
 B T U X R F I E S P W W E H U N O Z O A
 N I O Z O N E T P A T H O G E N S E B Y
 V O H K L E R R U R J L S N J C T T K Q
 G N I L H U C T E B E C V E N Z N A G B
 T N A T C E F N I S I D G V R E A R Y M
 N O I T A R O P A V E R I G L F D T G I
 Q M U R K R R U O I A R T R D A I I W F
 E R U V O M T G Y H L N V S O D X N E H
 E O U P L T O L C D A P L O I U O N L Q
 B F M F J P I S I L Z V M B I D L S L K
 D I S G J T I N U F N Y R O D R E F H K
 E L E H P D Y G O X N U D I C M S G E F
 P O L L U T A N T M T I E C N A I R A V
 U C A G U O R G A N I C O Q C R C R D E
 V Q M I C R O B E S A M P L E S I T X G

AERATION
 AQUIFER
 BOREHOLES
 CATCHMENT
 CHLORINATION
 CHLORINE
 COAGULANT
 COLIFORM
 COMPLIANCE
 DISCHARGE
 DISINFECTANT
 DISTRIBUTION
 EVAPORATION
 FILTRATION
 FLUORIDE
 FRESHWATER
 GROUNDWATER
 INFILTRATION
 INFRASTRUC-
 TURE
 MICROBES
 MONITORING
 NITRATE
 ORGANIC
 OXIDANT
 OZONE
 PATHOGENS
 POLLUTANT
 RESERVOIRS
 SAMPLES
 SANITARY
 SOURCE
 TURBIDITY
 VARIANCE
 WATERSHED
 WELLHEAD

FILL IN THE BLANKS

- The Customer Engagement Center's drive thru entrance is located on _____ Street.
- The _____ fund was established in 1999 in preparation of electric industry deregulation.
- The Commission sometimes use the bid process to hire private _____ to do specialized work or to finish projects quicker.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Mail or drop your entry by the Utility Commission office by September 15, 2018, to be eligible to win a prize.

Utility Commission employees and family members are not eligible to participate.

Customer Appreciation Fun Day



FVUC Provided School Supplies to all Peach Co Elementary Schools



Little TJ wasn't too sure about the supplies but his sister was happy!

NEWSLINE

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Emergency Service

Nights and Weekends
478-825-5482

Office Hours

8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Monday - Friday
(6:00 pm on Payment Due Dates ONLY)

Wishing Our Students a Great School Year!

