How Does the Commission Make its Decisions?

The North Carolina Utilities Commission (Commission) is responsible for regulating investor-owned public utilities generally, their rates, services and operations, and their expansion.

The Commission exercises its regulatory authority to, among other things, provide fair regulation of public utilities in the interest of the public; provide just and reasonable rates and charges for public utility services; promote adequate, reliable, and economical utility service; encourage and promote harmony between public utilities, their users, and the environment; facilitate the construction of facilities in and the extension of natural gas service to unserved areas; and promote the development of clean energy and energy efficiency through the implementation of a Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard.

Who Is the Commission & What Does the Commission Do?

The Commission was created by the General Assembly and is principally responsible for enforcing the Public Utilities Act, through which the Commission regulates the rates and services of all investor-owned public utilities in North Carolina.

The Commission regulates investor-owned public utilities that sell electricity, natural gas, water, wastewater services, telephone service (such as landlines), intrastate household goods moving services, busing, motor carrier services, and ferry services. The Commission also ensures the safety of natural gas pipelines and regulates brokers of motor carrier services.

The Commission is comprised of five commissioners, each of whom serves a six-year term. Two commissioners are appointed by the General Assembly – one upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Two commissioners are appointed by the Governor, and one is appointed by the State Treasurer; all three appointments are subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. Every three years, the commissioners elect one of the commissioners to serve as chairman.

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NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

How to Provide Public Witness Testimony

Why Does the Commission Hold Public Witness Hearings?

Among the responsibilities outlined in the Public Utilities Act, the Commission makes decisions based upon applicable law and the evidence submitted in a proceeding.

Customer witness hearings allow the using and consuming public to present testimony to the Commission as to how a public utility's proposed rates and construction of certain facilities might impact customers and their communities. Hearings are also used to identify utility customer service issues. Public witness hearings are either scheduled online or in-person within the public utility's service territory and are conducted in the evening hours when most people are able to come.

The Commission also holds expert witness hearings in which the experts testifying on behalf of the public utility, the Public Staff, or other intervenors answer questions from the parties and the Commissioners.

Expert witness hearings are typically held in Raleigh.

How to Testify

Public witnesses should sign up to testify; a sign-up sheet should be available near the courtroom entrance. When a witness is called to testify, the witness will be asked to state the witness's name and address, and to take an oath or affirm that the witness's statement will be true. The Commission does not allow signs, placards, skits, or other forms of demonstration in the courtroom.

The best testimony is brief, to the point, and provides new information.

When many people want to speak, the Commission may limit each person to five minutes or less to allow each witness an equal amount of time to testify. Any witness testifying may extend the witness's remarks in written form, but written testimony must be submitted at the time of their oral testimony at the public hearing. Testimony must be limited to matters that are relevant to the case for which the hearing is being held. A court reporter will record your statement. Later, a written transcript of the hearing will be posted on the Commission's website under the docket number that the Commission has assigned to the proceeding.

After the witness completes the witness's statement, an attorney or any of the Commissioners may ask the witness questions.

Please ensure all devices are silenced.

The Public Staff Intervenes on Behalf of the Consuming Public

The Public Staff - North Carolina Utilities Commission is a separate agency that appears before the Commission and represents the interests of the using and consuming public in all matters before the Commission. The Public Staff is not subject to the supervision, direction, or control of the Commission.

A Public Staff attorney will be at the hearing and can answer questions before and after the hearing.

The Public Staff audits, reviews, investigates, and makes recommendations to the Commission on utility rates and adequacy of service.

In addition, the Consumer Services division of the Public Staff mediates certain billing and service disputes that customers have with their utilities. The Consumer Services division can be reached toll-free at 866-380-9816 or online at www.publicstaff.nc.gov.

If You Would Rather Submit a Written Statement

To submit a statement online, visit www.ncuc.gov/contactus.html.