

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 56-46.1 and 56-580 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 10.1-1186.2:1, relating to permitting of electrical generating facilities.

[S 554]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 56-46.1 and 56-580 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 10.1-1186.2:1 as follows:

§ 10.1-1186.2:1. Impact of electric generating facilities.

A. The Department and the State Air Pollution Control Board have the authority to consider the cumulative impact of new and proposed electric generating facilities within the Commonwealth on attainment of the national ambient air quality standards.

B. The Department shall enter into a memorandum of agreement with the State Corporation Commission regarding the coordination of reviews of the environmental impacts of proposed electric generating facilities that must obtain certificates from the State Corporation Commission.

C. Prior to the close of the Commission's record on an application for certification of an electric generating facility pursuant to § 56-580, the Department shall provide to the State Corporation Commission a list of all environmental permits and approvals that are required for the proposed electric generating facility and shall specify any environmental issues, identified during the review process, that are not governed by those permits or approvals or are not within the authority of, and not considered by, the Department or other participating governmental entity in issuing such permits or approvals. The Department may recommend to the Commission that the Commission's record remain open pending completion of any required environmental review, approval or permit proceeding. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department, as requested by the Director, in preparing the information required by this subsection.

§ 56-46.1. Commission to consider environmental, economic and improvements in service reliability factors in approving construction of electrical utility facilities; approval required for construction of certain electrical transmission lines; notice and hearings.

A. Whenever the Commission is required to approve the construction of any electrical utility facility, it shall give consideration to the effect of that facility on the environment and establish such conditions as may be desirable or necessary to minimize adverse environmental impact. In order to avoid duplication of governmental activities, any valid permit or approval required for an electric generating plant and associated facilities issued or granted by a federal, state or local governmental entity charged by law with responsibility for issuing permits or approvals regulating environmental impact and mitigation of adverse environmental impact or for other specific public interest issues such as building codes, transportation plans, and public safety, whether such permit or approval is granted prior to or after the Commission's decision, shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section with respect to all matters that (i) are governed by the permit or approval or (ii) are within the authority of, and were considered by, the governmental entity in issuing such permit or approval, and the Commission shall impose no additional conditions with respect to such matters. Nothing in this section shall affect the ability of the Commission to keep the record of a case open. Nothing in this section shall affect any right to appeal such permits or approvals in accordance with applicable law. In the case of a proposed facility located in a region that was designated as of July 1, 2001, as serious nonattainment for the one-hour ozone standard as set forth in the federal Clean Air Act, the Commission shall not issue a decision approving such proposed facility that is conditioned upon issuance of any environmental permit or approval. In such proceedings if every proceeding under this subsection, the Commission shall receive and give consideration to all reports that relate to the proposed facility by state agencies concerned with environmental protection; and if requested by any county or municipality in which the facility is proposed to be built, to local comprehensive plans that have been adopted pursuant to Article 3 (§ 15.2-2223 et seq.) of Chapter 22 of Title 15.2. Additionally, the Commission (i) may shall consider the effect of the proposed facility on economic development within the Commonwealth and (ii) shall consider any improvements in service reliability that may result from the construction of such facility.

B. No overhead electrical transmission line of 150 kilovolts or more shall be constructed unless the State Corporation Commission shall, after at least thirty days' advance notice by (i) publication in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the counties and municipalities through which the line

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is proposed to be built, (ii) written notice to the governing body of each such county and municipality, and (iii) causing to be sent a copy of the notice by first class mail to all owners of property within the route of the proposed line, as indicated on the map or sketch of the route filed with the Commission, which requirement shall be satisfied by mailing the notice to such persons at such addresses as are indicated in the land books maintained by the commissioner of revenue, director of finance or treasurer of the county or municipality, approve such line. Such approval shall not be required for transmission lines constructed prior to January 1, 1983, for which the Commission has issued a certificate of convenience and necessity. Such notices shall include a written description of the proposed route the line is to follow, as well as a map or sketch of the route. As a condition to approval the Commission shall determine that the line is needed and that the corridor or route the line is to follow will reasonably minimize adverse impact on the scenic assets, historic districts and environment of the area concerned and, in the case of any application which is filed with the Commission in the years 1991 and 1992, for approval of a line of 500 kilovolts or more, any portion of which is proposed for construction west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, that the applicant will reasonably accommodate requests to wheel or transmit power from new electric generation facilities constructed after January 9, 1991.

C. If, prior to such approval, any interested party shall request a public hearing, the Commission shall, as soon as reasonably practicable after such request, hold such hearing or hearings at such place as may be designated by the Commission. In any hearing the public service company shall provide adequate evidence that existing rights-of-way cannot adequately serve the needs of the company.

If, prior to such approval, written requests therefor are received from twenty or more interested parties, the Commission shall hold at least one hearing in the area which would be affected by construction of the line, for the purpose of receiving public comment on the proposal. If any hearing is to be held in the area affected, the Commission shall direct that a copy of the transcripts of any previous hearings held in the case be made available for public inspection at a convenient location in the area for a reasonable time before such local hearing.

D. For purposes of this section, "interested parties" shall include the governing bodies of any counties or municipalities through which the line is proposed to be built, and persons residing or owning property in each such county or municipality and "environment" or "environmental" shall be deemed to include in meaning "historic," as well as a consideration of the probable effects of the line on the health and safety of the persons in the area concerned.

For purposes of this section, "qualifying facilities" means a cogeneration or small power production facility which meets the criteria of 18 C.F.R. Part 292; "public utility" means a public utility as defined in § 56-265.1; and "reasonably accommodate requests to wheel or transmit power" means:

1. That the applicant will make available to new electric generation facilities constructed after January 9, 1991, qualifying facilities and other nonutilities, a minimum of one-fourth of the total megawatts of the additional transmission capacity created by the proposed line, for the purpose of wheeling to public utility purchasers the power generated by such qualifying facilities and other nonutility facilities which are awarded a power purchase contract by a public utility purchaser in compliance with applicable state law or regulations governing bidding or capacity acquisition programs for the purchase of electric capacity from nonutility sources, provided that the obligation of the applicant will extend only to those requests for wheeling service made within the twelve months following certification by the State Corporation Commission of the transmission line and with effective dates for commencement of such service within the twelve months following completion of the transmission line.

2. That the wheeling service offered by the applicant, pursuant to subdivision D 1 of this section, will reasonably further the purposes of the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (P. L. 95-617), as demonstrated by submitting to the Commission, with its application for approval of the line, the cost methodologies, terms, conditions, and dispatch and interconnection requirements the applicant intends, subject to any applicable requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to include in its agreements for such wheeling service.

E. In the event that, at any time after the giving of the notice required in subsection B of this section, it appears to the Commission that consideration of a route or routes significantly different from the route described in the notice is desirable, the Commission shall cause notice of the new route or routes to be published and mailed in accordance with subsection B of this section. The Commission shall thereafter comply with the provisions of this section with respect to the new route or routes to the full extent necessary to give interested parties in the newly affected areas the same protection afforded interested parties affected by the route described in the original notice.

F. Approval of a transmission line pursuant to this section shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of § 15.2-2232 and local zoning ordinances with respect to such transmission line.

G. The Commission shall enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Environmental Quality regarding the coordination of their reviews of the environmental impact of electric generating plants and associated facilities.

§ 56-580. Transmission and distribution of electric energy.

A. The Commission shall continue to regulate pursuant to this title the distribution of retail electric energy to retail customers in the Commonwealth and, to the extent not prohibited by federal law, the transmission of electric energy in the Commonwealth.

B. The Commission shall continue to regulate, to the extent not prohibited by federal law, the reliability, quality and maintenance by transmitters and distributors of their transmission and retail distribution systems.

C. The Commission shall develop codes of conduct governing the conduct of incumbent electric utilities and affiliates thereof when any such affiliates provide, or control any entity that provides, generation, distribution, transmission or any services made competitive pursuant to § 56-581.1, to the extent necessary to prevent impairment of competition.

D. The Commission ~~may~~ shall permit the construction and operation of electrical generating facilities upon a finding that such generating facility and associated facilities ~~including transmission lines and equipment~~ (i) will have no material adverse effect upon reliability of electric service provided by any regulated public utility and (ii) are not otherwise contrary to the public interest. In review of its a petition for a certificate to construct and operate a generating facility described in this subsection, the Commission shall give consideration to the effect of the facility and associated facilities, ~~including transmission lines and equipment~~, on the environment and establish such conditions as may be desirable or necessary to minimize adverse environmental impact as provided in § 56-46.1. *In order to avoid duplication of governmental activities, any valid permit or approval required for an electric generating plant and associated facilities issued or granted by a federal, state or local governmental entity charged by law with responsibility for issuing permits or approvals regulating environmental impact and mitigation of adverse environmental impact or for other specific public interest issues such as building codes, transportation plans, and public safety, whether such permit or approval is prior to or after the Commission's decision, shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section with respect to all matters that (i) are governed by the permit or approval or (ii) are within the authority of, and were considered by, the governmental entity in issuing such permit or approval, and the Commission shall impose no additional conditions with respect to such matters. Nothing in this section shall affect the ability of the Commission to keep the record of a case open. Nothing in this section shall affect any right to appeal such permits or approvals in accordance with applicable law. In the case of a proposed facility located in a region that was designated as of July 1, 2001, as serious nonattainment for the one-hour ozone standard as set forth in the federal Clean Air Act, the Commission shall not issue a decision approving such proposed facility that is conditioned upon issuance of any environmental permit or approval.*

E. Nothing in this section shall impair the distribution service territorial rights of incumbent electric utilities, and incumbent electric utilities shall continue to provide distribution services within their exclusive service territories as established by the Commission. Nothing in this chapter shall impair the Commission's existing authority over the provision of electric distribution services to retail customers in the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, the authority contained in Chapters 10 (§ 56-232 et seq.) and 10.1 (§ 56-265.1 et seq.) of this title.

F. Nothing in this chapter shall impair the exclusive territorial rights of an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality as of July 1, 1999, nor shall any provision of this chapter apply to any such electric utility unless (i) that municipality elects to have this chapter apply to that utility or (ii) that utility, directly or indirectly, sells, offers to sell or seeks to sell electric energy to any retail customer outside the geographic area that was served by such municipality as of July 1, 1999, except any area within the municipality that was served by an incumbent public utility as of that date but was thereafter served by an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality pursuant to the terms of a franchise agreement between the municipality and the incumbent public utility. If an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality as of July 1, 1999, is made subject to the provisions of this chapter pursuant to clause (i) or (ii) of this subsection, then in such event the provisions of this chapter applicable to incumbent electric utilities shall also apply to any such utility, mutatis mutandis.