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## **Maryland PSC Begins Comprehensive Review of Utility Gas System Planning in 'Future of Gas' Proceeding** *Special Master Appointed to Conduct Proceedings*

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(BALTIMORE, MD) - The Maryland Public Service Commission has undertaken a comprehensive review of utilities' natural gas system planning with a goal of understanding current planning practices, and to address possible changes to that process, to assist in the achievement of a lower carbon future at a reasonable cost to ratepayers. This review will take place under the Commission's already-established 'Future of Gas' proceeding (Case No. [9707](#)).

These proceedings are designed to undertake a comprehensive review of current long-term capacity, supply, and capital investment planning practices of natural gas companies subject to the Commission's jurisdiction. They will also examine how gas and electric planning practices should be aligned. At the conclusion of these proceedings, the Commission will determine whether any changes are necessary with respect to natural gas company planning practices.

One major purpose of these proceedings is to ensure that gas company planning is consistent with Maryland's climate goals, particularly the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, which establishes Maryland's target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 60 percent below 2006 levels by 2031, and further directs the State to achieve a net-zero status by 2045. In furtherance of these goals, the State has, among other things, focused on reducing dependence on fossil fuels and encouraging renewable energy.

During the 2025 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Next Generation Energy Act, which, among other things, modified the Renewable Portfolio Standard, encouraged generation development, and specifically addressed criteria for utility cost recovery. This new law may have implications for this proceeding - notably, the Next Generation Energy Act requires that proposed gas infrastructure replacement project plans filed with the Commission meet specific requirements in order to be eligible for cost recovery through customer rates.

“Against the backdrop of this continued commitment to address climate change and utility cost control, the Commission takes these next steps to address how natural gas company planning practices should be structured on an ongoing basis so as to ensure that these goals are met at the lowest cost possible for consumers,” said Frederick H. Hoover, Chair of the Commission.

The Commission has designated Thomas C. Gorak, of the Law Offices of Thomas C. Gorak (based in Baltimore), to act as Special Master and presiding officer in these proceedings. Mr. Gorak has practiced law in both the federal and state public utility sectors for more than 44 years. He has served in a variety of roles, including Chief Counsel, and, later, interim Commissioner, of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of Hawaii, Assistant Maryland People’s Counsel, private attorney, expert witness, lecturer, and consultant. His career has primarily focused on representing and advising residential and small commercial customers, municipalities, cooperatives, and small local distribution companies, as well as commissions, both nationally and internationally.

The Commission directed the Special Master to set an initial prehearing conference to discuss procedural matters within 30 days of the issuance of the order.

The Commission recently addressed the interplay between the State’s climate goals and existing natural gas line extension policy. In an initial order issued on June 13, 2025, addressing stakeholder proposals for revisions of gas policy, the Commission observed that Maryland’s climate policies calling for continuing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, may no longer be compatible with the status-quo for how gas line extensions were funded. In its order, the Commission directed the Technical Staff to draft proposed regulations that would revise the state’s gas line extension policy.

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**About the Public Service Commission:**

*The Maryland Public Service Commission regulates electric and gas utilities and suppliers, telephone companies (land lines), private water and sewer companies, passenger motor vehicle carriers for hire, taxicab companies in some jurisdictions and bay pilot rates. The Commission implements the energy policy of the State and also regulates the siting of energy generating facilities and high-voltage transmission lines.*

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