

Five Questions with Easley Combined Utilities Commissioner Nick Caldwell



1 You've served on the ECU's commission since 2012. Why do you enjoy it?

It's a great organization. General Manager Joel Ledbetter and his team -- they're one of the best managed groups I've ever been around. And I really enjoy serving on the commission. I'm not really a politician per se but I was looking for a way to serve the public. And this isn't your typical political office. Although you are voted in, it's more about managing and an oversight, which fits into my wheelhouse.

2 What's something about the organization that would surprise customers?

There are only 70 employees. And we serve 15,000 residential and commercial units with electricity, 14,000 with water, and 11,000 with sewer. That's a lean operation that is well run. You see the bucket trucks all over town. I would have thought there were 200 to 300 employees when I first got involved.

3 Has ECU taken additional safety steps during the pandemic?

Yes. Our employees practice social distancing. We have installed plexiglas in our lobby and marked where customers should stand when they come in to pay their power, water and sewer bills. We also this year installed payment kiosks so customers don't have to enter the lobby. Keeping everyone safe is a priority for us.

4 Your work in the textile industry meant you and your wife moved around quite a bit. But y'all chose to return home to Easley to raise your children. Why?

When our four daughters were little and we would have babysitters come in, we'd get reports from all over town -- friends and neighbors saying, "Oh, we saw your girls out on a walk in their strollers" and things like that. That's part of why Easley is such a special place. It's small enough that you know everybody but big enough that you have the amenities that you want.

5 What's next for ECU? And you personally?

We're seeing a lot of residential growth, in part because of our proximity to Greenville. And we expect that to continue to see that growth for the foreseeable future. We're well prepared to meet the demand.

As for me, I enjoy my work on the commission and hope to continue. And my youngest daughter just started her fourth year at University of Georgia. As my father-in-law once told me, I'm about to get a big raise.