

Article 2.

Electric Membership Corporations.

§ 117-6. Title of Article.

This Article may be cited as the "Electric Membership Corporation Act." (1935, c. 291, s. 1.)

§ 117-7. Definitions.

The following terms, whenever used or referred to in this Article, shall have the following meanings, unless a different meaning clearly appears from the context:

- (1) "Acquire" shall mean acquire by purchase, lease, devise, gift or other mode of acquisition.
- (2) "Board" shall mean the board of directors of a corporation formed under this Article.
- (3) "Corporation" shall mean a corporation formed under this Article.
- (4) "Federal agency" shall mean and include the United States of America, the President of the United States of America, the Federal Emergency Administrator of Public Works and any and all other authorities, agencies, and instrumentalities of the United States of America, heretofore or hereafter created.
- (5) "Law" shall mean any act or statute, general, special or local of this State.
- (6) "Person" shall mean and include natural persons, firms, associations, corporations, business trusts, partnerships and bodies politic. (1935, c. 291, s. 2.)

§ 117-8. Formation in unserved communities; filing application with Rural Electrification Authority.

When any number of persons residing in the community not served, or inadequately served, with electrical energy desire to secure electrical energy for their community and desire to form corporations to be known as electric membership corporations for said purpose, they shall file application with the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority for permission to form such corporation. (1935, c. 291, s. 3.)

§ 117-9. Issuance of privilege for formation of such corporation.

Whenever any such application is made by as many as five members of the community, the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority shall cause a survey of said territory to be made and if, in its opinion, the proposal is feasible, shall issue to said community a privilege for the formation of a corporation as hereinafter set out. Whenever an application has been filed by any community with the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority, and its application for formation of an electric membership corporation has been approved, the same may be formed as hereinafter provided. (1935, c. 291, s. 4.)

§ 117-10. Formation authorized.

Any number of natural persons not less than three may, by executing, filing and recording a certificate as hereinafter provided, form a corporation not organized for pecuniary profit for the

purpose of promoting and encouraging the fullest possible use of electric energy in the rural section of the State by making electric energy available to inhabitants of the State at the lowest cost consistent with sound economy and prudent management of the business of such corporations. (1935, c. 291, s. 5.)

§ 117-10.1. Municipal franchises.

An electric membership corporation shall be eligible to receive a franchise pursuant to G.S. 160-2(6) from any city or town:

- (1) In which such electric membership corporation is on April 20, 1965 furnishing electric service at retail to a majority of the electric meters; or
- (2) To which such electric membership corporation is on April 20, 1965 furnishing the entire supply of electricity at wholesale; or
- (3) Which is newly incorporated subsequent to April 20, 1965, and in which on the effective date of such incorporation the electric membership corporation is furnishing electric service at retail to a majority of the meters. (1965, c. 287, s. 9.)

§ 117-10.2. Restriction on municipal service.

Except as otherwise provided in this section, no electric membership corporation shall furnish electric service to, or within the limits of, any incorporated city or town, except pursuant to a franchise that may be granted under the provisions of G.S. 117-10.1, or as permitted under G.S. 160A-331, 160A-331.2, 160A-332, and 160A-333. In addition, an electric membership corporation may furnish electric service to, or within the limits of, any incorporated city or town if the city or town and all electric suppliers, including public utilities, other electric membership corporations and other cities or towns, then furnishing electric service to or within such city or town consent thereto in writing. (1965, c. 287, s. 10; 1997-346, s. 3; 1999-111, s. 1; 2005-150, s. 6; 2007-419, s. 2.)

§ 117-10.3: Repealed by Session Laws 2007-419, s. 3, effective August 21, 2007.

§ 117-11. Contents of certificate of incorporation.

(a) Required Provisions. – The certificate of incorporation shall be entitled and endorsed "Certificate of Incorporation of _____ Electric Membership Corporation" (the blank space being filled in with the name of the corporation), and shall state:

- (1) The name of the corporation, which name shall be such as to distinguish it from any other corporation.
- (2) A reasonable description of the territory in which its operations are principally to be conducted.
- (3) The location of its principal office and the post-office address thereof.
- (4) The maximum number of directors, not less than three.
- (5) The names and post-office addresses of the directors, not less than three, who are to manage the affairs of the corporation for the first year of its existence, or until their successors are chosen.

- (6) The period, if any, limited for the duration of the corporation. If the duration of the corporation is to be perpetual, this fact should be stated.
- (7) The terms and conditions upon which members of the corporation shall be admitted.

(b) Permissible Provisions. – The certificate of incorporation of a corporation may also contain any provision not contrary to law which the incorporators may choose to insert for the regulation of its business, and for the conduct of the affairs of the corporation; and any provisions, creating, defining, limiting or regulating the powers of the corporation, its directors and members. (1935, c. 291, s. 6.)

§ 117-12. Execution and filing of certificate of incorporation by residents of territory to be served.

The natural persons executing the certificate of incorporation shall be residents of the territory in which the principal operations of the corporation are to be conducted who are desirous of using electric energy to be furnished by the corporation. The certificate of incorporation shall be acknowledged by the subscribers before an officer qualified to administer oaths. When so acknowledged, the certificate may be filed in the office of the Secretary of State, who shall forthwith prepare a certified copy or copies thereof and forward one to the register of deeds in each county in which a portion of the territory of the corporation is located, who shall forthwith file such certified copy or copies in their respective offices and record the same as other certificates of incorporation are recorded. As soon as the provisions of this section have been complied with, the proposed corporation described in the certificate so filed, under its designated name, shall be and constitute a body corporate. (1935, c. 291, s. 7; 1967, c. 823, s. 32.)

§ 117-13. Board of directors; compensation; president and secretary.

Each corporation formed under this Article shall have a board of directors, in which management of the affairs of the corporation is vested. The directors of the corporation, other than those named in its certificate of incorporation, shall be elected annually by the members entitled to vote, but if the bylaws so provide the directors may be elected on a staggered-term basis: Provided, that the total number of directors on a board shall be so divided that not less than one third of them, or as nearly thereto as their division for that purpose will permit, shall be elected annually, and no term shall be longer than for three years; and provided further that, except as may be necessary in inaugurating such a plan, all directors shall be elected for terms of equal duration. The directors shall be entitled to receive for their services only such compensation as is provided in the bylaws. The board shall elect annually from its own number a president and a secretary. The directors must be members of the corporation, except that for those corporations whose principal purpose is to furnish bulk electric wholesale power supplies and whose membership consists of other electric membership corporations, the directors may be members, directors, officers or managers of the member corporations, and shall be elected by the member corporation's board of directors. (1935, c. 291, s. 8; 1959, c. 387, s. 1; 1969, c. 760; 1975, c. 314; 1979, c. 285, s. 2; 1981, c. 478.)

§ 117-14. Powers of board.

The board shall have power to do all things necessary or convenient in conducting the business of a corporation, including, but not limited to:

- (1) The power to adopt and amend bylaws for the management and regulation of the affairs of the corporation: Provided however, that the certificate of incorporation may reserve to the members of the corporation the power to amend the bylaws. The bylaws of a corporation may make provisions not inconsistent with law or its certificate of incorporation, regulating the admission, withdrawal, suspension or expulsion of members; the transfer of membership; the fees and dues of members and the termination of memberships on nonpayment of dues or otherwise; the number, times and manner of choosing, qualifications, terms of office, official designations, powers, duties, and compensations of its officers; defining a vacancy in the board or in any office and the manner of filling it; the number of members to constitute a quorum at meetings, the date of the annual meeting and the giving of notice thereof, and the holding of special meetings and the giving of notice thereof; the terms and conditions upon which the corporation is to render service to its members; the disposition of the revenues and receipts of the corporation; regular and special meetings of the board and the giving of notice thereof.
- (2) To appoint agents and employees and to fix their compensation and the compensation of the officers of the corporation.
- (3) To execute instruments.
- (4) To delegate to one or more of the directors or to the agents and employees of a corporation such powers and duties as it may deem proper.
- (5) To make its own rules and regulations as to its procedure. (1935, c. 291, s. 9; 1941, c. 260.)

§ 117-15. Certificates of membership.

A corporation may issue to its members certificates of membership and each member shall be entitled to only one vote at the meetings of the corporation. (1935, c. 291, s. 10.)

§ 117-16. Corporate purpose; terms and conditions of membership.

The corporate purpose of each corporation formed hereunder shall be to render service to its members only, and no person shall become or remain a member unless such person shall use energy supplied by such corporation and shall have complied with the terms and conditions in respect to membership contained in the bylaws of such corporation: Provided, that such terms and conditions of membership shall be reasonable; and provided further, that no bona fide applicant for membership, who is able and willing to satisfy and abide by all such terms and conditions of membership, shall be denied arbitrarily, or capriciously, or without good cause. With respect to the members of an electric membership corporation whose principal purpose is to furnish or cause to be furnished bulk electric supplies at wholesale, the word "use" as used in this section shall also mean either "use and purchase" or "purchase" solely, as the case may be, and the words "supplied by" shall also mean "supplied for the account of". With respect to an electric membership corporation whose principal purpose is to furnish or cause to be furnished bulk electric supplies at wholesale, it shall be lawful for such corporation to enter into joint arrangements with other power supply entities, including but not limited to investor-owned public utilities and bodies politic, for the purchase and sale of bulk power supplies and bulk power services and for the joint ownership of bulk power supply properties. (1935, c. 291, s. 11; 1959, c. 387, s. 2; 1979, c. 285, s. 3.)

§ 117-16.1. Discrimination prohibited.

No electric membership corporation shall, as to rates or services, make or grant any unreasonable preference or advantage to any member or subject any member to any unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage. No electric membership corporation shall establish or maintain any unreasonable difference as to rates or services either as between localities or as between classes of service. No electric membership corporation shall give, pay, or receive any rebate or bonus, directly or indirectly, or mislead or deceive its members in any manner as to rates charged for the services of such electric membership corporation. (1965, c. 287, s. 11.)

§ 117-17. General grant of powers.

Each corporation formed under this Article is hereby vested with all power necessary or requisite for the accomplishment of its corporate purpose and capable of being delegated by the legislature; and no enumeration of particular powers hereby granted shall be construed to impair any general grant of power herein contained, nor to limit any such grant to a power or powers of the same class as those so enumerated. (1935, c. 291, s. 12.)

§ 117-18. Specific grant of powers.

Subject only to the Constitution of the State, a corporation created under the provisions of this Article shall have power to do any and all acts or things necessary or convenient for carrying out the purpose for which it was formed, including, but not limited to:

- (1) To sue and be sued.
- (2) To have a seal and alter the same at pleasure.
- (3) To acquire, hold and dispose of property, real and personal, tangible and intangible, or interests therein, and to pay therefor in cash or on credit, and to secure and procure payment of all or any part of the purchase price thereof on such terms and conditions as the board shall determine.
- (4) To render service and to acquire, own, operate, maintain and improve a system or systems.
- (5) To pledge all or any part of its revenue or mortgage or otherwise encumber all or any part of its property for the purpose of securing the payment of the principal of and interest on any of its obligations.
- (6) The right to apply to the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority for permission to construct or place any parts of its system or lines in and along any State highway or over any lands that are now, or may be, the property of this State, or any political subdivision thereof. In all questions involving the right-of-way, or the right of eminent domain, the rulings of the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority are final. Notwithstanding the foregoing sentence and notwithstanding subdivision (7) of G.S. 117-2, electric membership corporations may, without necessity of the Authority's rulings or participation, exercise the right of eminent domain for the purposes of constructing, operating and maintaining electric generating, transmission, distribution and related facilities, individually and solely in their own names, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 40A of the General Statutes; provided, that notwithstanding G.S. 117-30, the foregoing grant of the power of eminent

domain to electric membership corporations shall not apply to telephone membership corporations; and, provided further, that the grant of the power of eminent domain is supplementary to the power of eminent domain already devolved upon the Authority.

- (7) To accept gifts or grants of money, property, real or personal, from any person or federal agency, and to accept voluntary and uncompensated services.
- (8) To make any and all contracts necessary or convenient for the full exercise of the powers in this Article granted, including, but not limited to, contracts with any person or federal agency, for the purchase or sale of energy; for the management and conduct of the business of the corporation, including the regulation of the rates, fees or charges for service rendered by the corporation.
- (9) To sell, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber or dispose of all or any part of its property, as hereinafter provided.
- (10) To contract debts, borrow money, and to issue or assume the payment of bonds.
- (11) To fix, maintain and collect fees, rents, tolls and other charges for service rendered.
- (12) To perform any and all of the foregoing acts and to do any and all of the foregoing things under, through or by means of its own officers, agents and employees, or by contracts with any person or federal agency.
- (13) To extend, construct, operate and maintain power lines into adjacent states.
- (14) As to electric membership corporations, to conduct the activities permitted by G.S. 117-18.1. (1935, c. 291, s. 13; 1941, c. 335; 1975, c. 141; 1999-180, s. 1; 2001-487, s. 38(f).)

§ 117-18.1. Subsidiary business activities.

(a) Electric membership corporations may form, organize, acquire, hold, dispose of, and operate any interest up to and including full controlling interest in separate business entities that provide energy services and products, telecommunications services and products, water, and wastewater collection and treatment, so long as those other business entities meet all of the following conditions:

- (1) They are not financed with loans or grants from the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the USDA or with similar financing from any successor agency. This limitation shall not apply to RUS or USDA loans or grants, or loans or grants from successor agencies, for water or wastewater collection and treatment projects.
- (2) They are subject to all taxes, specifically including federal and State income taxes, levied against business entities of the same structure and engaged in the same activities.
- (3) They fully compensate the electric membership corporation for the use of personnel, services, equipment, or tangible and intangible property, the greater of (i) a competitive price, which is a price comparable with prices generally being charged at the time in arms length transactions in the same market, or (ii) the electric membership corporation's fully

distributed costs, which shall include all direct and indirect costs, including cost of capital incurred in providing the personnel, services, equipment, tangible property, or intangible property in question. The value of real property shall include the intangible value of not having to purchase the real property being used, and the value of the identification with the EMC that will exist because of the use of the particular real property. Should the Utilities Commission, upon complaint showing reasonable grounds for investigation, find after investigation, that the charges for those transactions between the electric membership corporation and the other business entity do not conform with the provisions of this subdivision, the Utilities Commission is empowered to direct the electric membership corporation to adjust those charges to comply with the provisions of this subdivision. If the electric membership corporation does not comply with the Utilities Commission's directive, then the Utilities Commission is empowered to direct the electric membership corporation to divest its interest in the other business entity. For purposes of enforcing this subdivision, members of the Utilities Commission, the Utilities Commission staff, and the Public Staff are authorized to inspect the books and records of such other business entities and the electric membership corporations. The Utilities Commission shall have the authority to adopt rules and reporting requirements to enforce this subdivision. The provisions of G.S. 62-310(a), 62-311, 62-312, 62-313, 62-314, 62-315, 62-316, 62-326, and 62-327 shall apply to electric membership corporations with respect to the application of this subdivision.

- (4) They are organized and operated pursuant to Chapter 55 or Chapter 57D of the General Statutes.
- (5) They do not receive from an electric membership corporation any investment, loan, guarantee, or pledge of assets in an amount that, in the aggregate, exceeds ten percent (10%) of the assets of that electric membership corporation.

(b) An electric membership corporation may not form or organize a separate business entity to engage in activities involving the distribution, storage, or sale of oil, as defined in G.S. 143-215.77(8), specifically including liquefied petroleum gases, but may acquire, hold, dispose of, and operate any interest in an existing business entity already engaged in these activities, subject to the other provisions of this section.

(c) No director, or spouse of a director, of an electric membership corporation may be employed or have any financial interest in any separate business entity formed, organized, acquired, held, or operated by an electric membership corporation pursuant to the provisions of this section.

(d) The provisions of subdivisions (1) and (3) of subsection (a) of this section do not apply to the separate business activities of an electric membership corporation that forms, organizes, acquires, holds, disposes of, or operates any interest up to and including

full controlling interest in a separate business entity that provides or supports high-speed broadband services to one or more households, businesses, or community anchor points in an unserved area. For purposes of this subsection, the following definitions shall apply:

- (1) "Anchor points." – The term shall include schools, libraries, community colleges, community centers, and other similar places.
- (2) "High-speed broadband services." – Internet transmission speeds of a minimum of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream and 3 Mbps upstream.
- (3) "Unserved area." – A location where inhabitants or businesses do not have access to high-speed broadband services. (1999-180, s. 2; 2013-157, s. 30; 2019-17, s. 1.)

§ 117-19. Taxes and assessments.

(a) From and after April 20, 1965, no electric membership corporation heretofore or hereafter organized, reorganized, or domesticated under the provisions of this Chapter shall be a public agency; nor shall any such corporation be, or have the rights of, a political subdivision of the State.

(b) With respect to its properties owned and revenues received on and after January 1, 1967, each electric membership corporation operating within the State shall be subject to, and shall pay taxes and assessments under, all laws relative to State, county, municipal and other local taxes and assessments applicable to the electric light and power companies in this State, except income tax.

(c) through (e) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-6, s. 16. (1935, c. 291, s. 14; 1965, c. 287, s. 12; 1997-6, s. 16.)

§ 117-20. Encumbrance, sale, etc., of property.

No corporation may sell, mortgage, lease or otherwise encumber or dispose of any of its property (other than merchandise and property which lie within the limits of an incorporated city or town, or which shall represent not in excess of ten percent (10%) of the total value of the corporation's assets, or which in the judgment of the board are not necessary or useful in operating the corporation) unless

- (1) Authorized so to do by the votes cast in person or by proxy by at least two-thirds of its total membership, and
- (2) The consent of the holders of seventy-five per centum (75%) in amount of the bonds of such corporation then outstanding is obtained.

Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, the members of such a corporation may, by the affirmative majority of the votes cast in person or by proxy at any meeting of the members, delegate to the board of directors the power and authority (i) to borrow moneys from any source and in such amounts as the board may from time to time determine, (ii) to mortgage or otherwise pledge or encumber any or all of the corporation's property or assets as security therefor, and (iii) with respect to Electric Membership Corporations only, to sell and lease back any of the corporation's property or assets. (1935, c. 291, s. 15; 1965, c. 287, s. 13; 1969, c. 670, s. 1; 1987, c. 448, s. 1; 1997-346, s. 4; 1999-111, s. 1; 2003-24, s. 1.)

§ 117-21. Issuance of bonds.

A corporation formed hereunder shall have power and is hereby authorized, from time to time, to issue its bonds in anticipation of its revenue for any corporate purpose. Said bonds may be authorized by resolution or resolutions of the board, and may bear such date or dates, mature at such time or times, not exceeding 40 years from their respective dates, bear interest at such rate or rates, be in such denominations, be in such form, either coupon or registered, carry such registration privileges, be executed in such manner, be payable in such medium of payment, at such place or places, and be subject to such terms of redemption, not exceeding par and accrued interest, as such resolution or resolutions may provide. Such bonds may be sold in such manner and upon such terms as the board may determine at not less than par and accrued interest. Any provision of law to the contrary notwithstanding, any bonds and the interest coupons appertaining thereto, if any, issued pursuant to this Article shall possess all of the qualities of negotiable instruments. (1935, c. 291, s. 16; 1969, c. 670, s. 2.)

§ 117-22. Covenants or agreements for security of bonds.

In connection with the issuance of any bonds, a corporation may make covenants or agreements and do any and all acts or things that a business corporation can make or do under the laws of the State in order to secure its obligations or which, in the absolute discretion of the board, tend to make the obligations more marketable, notwithstanding that such covenants, agreements, acts and things may constitute limitations on the exercise of the powers herein granted. (1935, c. 291, s. 17.)

§ 117-23. Purchase and cancellation of bonds.

A corporation shall have power out of any funds available therefor to purchase any bonds issued by it at a price not exceeding the principal amount thereof and accrued interest thereon. All bonds so purchased shall be canceled. (1935, c. 291, s. 18.)

§ 117-24. Dissolution.

Any corporation created hereunder may be dissolved by filing, as hereinafter provided, a certificate which shall be entitled and endorsed "Certificate of Dissolution of _____ " (the blank space being filled in with the name of the corporation) and shall state:

- (1) Name of the corporation, and if such corporation is a corporation resulting from a consolidation as herein provided, the names of the original corporations.
- (2) The date of filing of the certificate of incorporation, and if such corporation is a corporation resulting from a consolidation as herein provided, the dates on which the certificates of incorporation of the original corporations were filed.
- (3) That the corporation elects to dissolve.
- (4) The name and post-office address of each of its directors, and the name, title and post-office address of each of its officers.

Such certificate shall be subscribed and acknowledged in the same manner as an original certificate of incorporation by the president or a vice-president, and the secretary or an assistant secretary, who shall make and annex an affidavit, stating that they have been authorized to execute and file such certificate by the votes cast in person or by proxy by at least two-thirds of its total membership.

A certificate of dissolution and a certified copy or copies thereof shall be filed in the same place as an original certificate of incorporation and thereupon the corporation shall be deemed to be dissolved.

Such corporation shall continue for the purpose of paying, satisfying and discharging any existing liabilities or obligations and collecting or liquidating its assets, and doing all other acts required to adjust and wind up its business and affairs, and may sue and be sued in its corporate name. Any assets remaining after all liabilities or obligations of the corporation have been satisfied or discharged shall be distributed among the members in such manner as is provided for in the corporation's charter or bylaws, and the charter or bylaws may provide for distributions to persons who were members in one or more prior years. (1935, c. 291, s. 19; 1965, c. 287, s. 14; 1987, c. 448, s. 2; 1997-346, s. 5; 1999-111, s. 1; 2003-24, s. 1.)

§ 117-25. Amendment of certificate of incorporation.

A corporation created hereunder may amend its certificate of incorporation to change its corporate name, to increase or reduce the number of its directors or change any other provision therein: Provided, however, that no corporation shall amend its certificate of incorporation to embody therein any purpose, power or provisions which would not be authorized if its original certificate, including such additional or changed purpose, power or provisions, were offered for filing at the time a certificate under this section is offered. Such amendment may be accomplished by filing a certificate which shall be entitled and endorsed "Certificate of Amendment of _____ Electric Membership Corporation" and state:

- (1) The name of the corporation, and if it has been changed, the name under which it was originally incorporated.
- (2) The date of filing the certificate of incorporation in each public office where filed.
- (3) The purposes, powers, or provisions, if any, to be amended or eliminated, and the purposes, powers or provisions, if any, to be added or substituted.

Such certificate shall be subscribed in the same manner as an original certificate of incorporation hereunder by the president or a vice-president, by the secretary or the assistant secretary, who shall make and annex an affidavit stating that they have been authorized to execute and file such certificate by the votes cast in person or by proxy by a majority of the members of the corporation entitled to vote. Such certificate shall be filed in the same places as an original certificate of incorporation and thereupon the amendment shall be deemed to have been effected. (1935, c. 291, s. 20.)

§ 117-26. Application for grant or loan from governmental agency.

Whenever any corporation organized hereunder desires to secure a grant or loan from any agency of the United States government now in existence or hereafter authorized, they shall apply through the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority and not direct to the United States agency, and the said North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority alone shall have the authority to make applications for grants or loans to any corporations created hereunder. (1935, c. 291, s. 21.)

§ 117-27. Repealed by Session Laws 1965, c. 287, s. 15.