

RCW 80.28.340 Determination that a wastewater company is unfit to provide wastewater service on a system of sewerage—Commission may order transfer—Power of eminent domain. (1) If the commission

determines, after providing notice and opportunity for a hearing in the manner required for complaints under RCW 80.04.110, that a wastewater company is unfit to provide wastewater service on any system of sewerage, under its ownership, the commission may order the transfer of any such system or systems to a capable wastewater company.

(2) In determining whether a wastewater company is unfit to provide wastewater service on a system of sewerage in consultation with the department of health or the department of ecology as appropriate to the agencies' jurisdiction, the commission may consider the company's technical and managerial expertise to operate the system of sewerage, the company's financial soundness and the company's willingness and ability to make ongoing investments necessary to maintain compliance with statutory and regulatory standards for the safety, adequacy, efficiency, and reasonableness of the service provided.

(3) Before ordering the transfer of a system of sewerage owned by a wastewater company that is unfit to provide service, the commission must first determine that:

(a) Alternatives to the transfer are impractical or not economically feasible;

(b) The acquiring wastewater company is willing and able to acquire the system or systems of sewerage, [is] financially sound, and has the technical and managerial expertise to own and operate the system or systems of sewerage in compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory standards; and

(c) Rates paid by existing customers served by the acquiring wastewater company will not increase unreasonably because of the acquisition of the system of sewerage or because of expenditures that may be necessary to assure compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory standards for the safety, adequacy, efficiency, and reasonableness of the service provided.

(4) The sale price for the unfit wastewater company's system or systems of sewerage assets must be determined by agreement between the unfit wastewater company and the acquiring capable wastewater company subject to a finding by the commission that the agreed price is reasonable. A price is deemed reasonable if it does not exceed the original cost of plant in service, minus accumulated depreciation, minus contributions in aid to construction. If the unfit wastewater company and the acquiring capable wastewater company are unable to agree on the sale price or the commission finds that the agreed sale price is not reasonable, the acquiring capable wastewater company may initiate a condemnation proceeding in superior court in the manner provided by chapter 8.04 RCW to determine the compensation to be paid by the acquiring capable wastewater company for the failed system or systems of sewerage assets.

(5) The capable wastewater company acquiring an unfit wastewater company's system or systems shall have the same immunity from liability as wastewater companies assuming substandard systems as set forth in RCW 80.28.275.

(6) The commission must provide copies of the notice required by subsection (1) of this section to the department of health or the department of ecology, as appropriate to the agencies' jurisdiction,

and all proximate public entities providing wastewater utility service.

(7) Any capable wastewater company approved by the commission to acquire the system or systems of sewerage of an unfit wastewater company must submit to the commission, for approval, a financial plan, including a timetable, for bringing the acquired system of sewerage assets into compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory standards. The acquiring capable wastewater company must also provide a copy of the plan to the department of health or the department of ecology, as appropriate to the agencies' jurisdiction, and other state or local agency as the commission may direct. The commission must give the department of health or the department of ecology, as appropriate to the agencies' jurisdiction, adequate opportunity to comment on the plan and must consider any comments submitted in deciding whether or not to approve the plan.

(8) The legislature grants to any private entity the power of eminent domain, for exercise only under the circumstances described in this section. However, a private entity must obtain authorization from the city, town, or county with jurisdiction over the subject property after the legislative authority of the city, town, or county has passed an ordinance requiring that property be taken for public use. This subsection does not limit eminent domain authority granted by any other provision of law. [2011 c 214 s 5.]

Findings—Purpose—Limitation of chapter—Effective date—2011 c 214: See notes following RCW 80.04.010.