More than a job

Henning city, municipal utility staff contribute to community in multiple ways

by Steve Downer

The Henning municipal utility powers its community in more ways than one. Henning is the youngest Minnesota municipal electric utility. It was formed, according to MMUA records, 49 years ago, in 1969.

As it turns out, the voters who approved the formation of the municipal utility appear to have made a wise choice. The people of Henning at the time were no doubt aware of the 1965 municipalization of Elbow Lake, 46 miles to the southwest, which resulted in a legal dispute that reached all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Elbow Lake prevailed in that case, which opened up the transmission grid to the 'wheelering' of power.

Municipal joint action was also gaining momentum in the Upper Midwest. Power supply topics under consideration included the coming allocation of federal hydropower from the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), and the need to develop supplemental sources. This ferment was another likely spur to the formation of the municipal electric utility.

Not content to rest on its laurels, the city built a municipal natural gas system around 20 years ago. Scott Grabe, utilities superintendent, was hired 18 years ago, to help with the additional duties. Grabe, a Barnesville native, had graduated from Wadena Technical College's lineworker program and was working for an electrical construction contractor.

Henning, population 802, now employs three journey lineworkers: Grabe, Brenden Markuson and Ben Oseien. The crew has recently been joined by Jake Williams. The men keep busy with a variety of tasks, and also rebuild a section of the electrical sys-

Henning: see page 7 please

MPUC issues order following investigation into electric energy fuel cost adjustments

by Steve Downer

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) Feb. 27 issued a final order in an investigation into electric energy fuel cost adjustments (FCAs). While the order doesn’t apply to municipal electric utilities, which set their own rates, the issue may be of interest to MMUA members.

The MPUC noted that, by design, the existing FCA mechanism is aimed at providing a quick reconciliation of fuel costs beyond a utility’s control. But over time, and in the experience of non-utility stakeholders, identifying costs that are beyond a utility’s control has become less clear, and the sorting of facts more complex as other items, including purchased power, are recovered under the FCA. This has made understanding the relationship among costs, including those contained within the FCA and those recovered in base rates, increasingly difficult.

The issued pitted the state’s investor-owned utilities against the Minnesota Attorney General, Department of Commerce, a group of large industrial customers and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

The Department of Commerce (Department) recommended a framework, with the option to reset the fuel cost rate annually, if necessary, and to authorize utilities to track changes in fuel costs without a carrying charge and to annually request a true-up of over or under-recoveries (without a sharing mechanism). The fuel rate would be set in advance for each month; and monthly rates may differ, depending on fuel costs during.

Additionally, the Department recommended that if a utility demonstrates that actual costs differ significantly over time, or the Commission determines that the FCA rates are no longer reasonable, the Commission could reset a utility’s FCA rates.

The industrial customers said disputing prudence after costs have been recovered dilutes the burden on utilities by lowering the level of scrutiny a utility faces in demonstrating prudence. Further challenging cost recovery is the difficulty of accessing, months or years later, data and other evidence germane to a prudence determination.

The Attorney General said the Department’s proposed price signals will be more effective because customers will better understand their bills.

Xcel stated that the FCA effectively serves a critical function by reducing volatility of operating margins and FCAs: see next page please

Nomination window open for MMUA board, awards

MMUA’s Nominations and Awards Committee is accepting nominations for MMUA awards. The deadline to submit a nomination is June 15. This is a great way to recognize a municipal utility colleague, a public official, or a municipal utility system for showing leadership and innovation and providing an example for others to follow.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from MMUA.org at the Awards and Recognition page on the ‘About’ menu. All nominations will be considered by MMUA’s Nomination and Awards Committee and the awards will be presented at the MMUA Summer Conference on August 21.

Here is a brief summary of the awards for which we are accepting nominations. Please consider recognizing the accomplishments of a member of our community by submitting a nomination.

• Public Service Award. This award is given to a utility that has demonstrated leadership and innovation in customer service, energy efficiency or renewables, technology, or other areas.

• Public Service Award. This award is given to a state, or federal elected or appointed official who has been a strong

Nominations: see page 3 please

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District Court Rules on Local Governance
page 4
changed. The cost recovery mechanism is likely to increase hedging to offset volatility, increasing costs to ratepayers. Xcel pointed to historical FCA data in support of its contention that ratepayers benefit from a timely pass-through of cost savings. According to the Company’s data, the per-kWh cost of electricity has decreased since 2009 and ratepayers have benefitted from the decreases as well as monthly recovery of those savings through the FCA. Minnesota Power (MP) disputed the Department’s claim that utilities are not incentivized to minimize fuel costs in the same way that they are incentivized to minimize costs between rate cases, saying that the utility has implemented a cost-saving program that can save customers money by reducing costs.

Xcel stated that the FCA is only one part of its stable financial structure. Xcel also stated that the unique characteristics of fuel costs—they are driven by commodity prices and potentially volatile—warrant recovery between rate cases. The changing cost recovery mechanism is likely to increase hedging to offset volatility, increasing costs to ratepayers. Xcel pointed to historical FCA data in support of its contention that ratepayers benefit from a timely pass-through of cost savings. According to the Company’s data, the per-kWh cost of electricity has decreased since 2009 and ratepayers have benefitted from the decreases as well as monthly recovery of those savings through the FCA. Minnesota Power (MP) disputed the Department’s claim that utilities are not incentivized to minimize fuel costs in the same way that they are incentivized to minimize costs between rate cases, saying that the utility has implemented a cost-saving program that can save customers money by reducing costs.

MMUA’s St. Paul office is now available for use by its members

MMUA’s office in Plymouth is conveniently located for most purposes. Unfortunately, it’s not very conveniently located for state government relations staff. Finding some reasonably-priced office space near the Capitol has been on our to-do list for several years. That mission is now accomplished. We have leased space in the Capitol Ridge Building, just off I-94 and very close to the Capitol. It’s better known as the Capitol Ridge Hotel, formerly the Kelly Inn. The address is 161 St Anthony Ave, Suite 800, St Paul, MN 55103.

It’s not a big place, but it is adequate for likely uses. If you have business in St. Paul, let us know, and it will be a great place for you to meet MMUA staff and prepare for your meetings. We’re hoping that it becomes home base for the whole group that frequents the Capitol representing various Public Power constituencies.

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SOLICITATION

FCAs: continued from front page

therefore risk, as perceived
by financial markets, result
in the next year’s monthly electric
fuel rates.

• the monthly fuel clause
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You might hope that as both are government—the Minnesota Division of Energy Resources (DER) and municipal electric utilities—that there would be comity—some appreciation for the role each plays in the provision of electric service in the state. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case.

The latest evidence comes in the matter of North Star Electric Cooperative and Warroad Municipal Light & Power. Whereas in past years it would be the state trying to sort out issues between the municipals and cooperatives, now it is the municipals and cooperatives trying to set the regulators straight.

Warroad and North Star in 2013 reached agreement on a service territory transfer. The agreement, it seems, was emailed to a wrong state address, and apparently was never recognized. When the utilities subsequently reviewed their boundaries as part of the state's effort to digitize the electric service area maps, the error was discovered. Rather than cleaning up the administrative mess with as little fuss as possible, the DER has urged rejection of the agreement. The city and cooperative have ably expressed the very real practical difficulties of undoing an electric service area agreement. These points—including the fact that the customer will save money with city service—have been covered in the January and February editions of the MMUA Resource newsletter.

Large questions exist. Municipal utilities may well be concerned about the thought expressed when the DER asked the city why it was in the public interest for the customer to pay "for the privilege" of receiving electric service from the city. "Privilege," in this context, is a poor word choice, at best. Minnesota electric utility service area law never discussed privilege. It does contain, inherently, an obligation to serve. That obligation extends to every customer in a service area, the local policymaker should not ignore it. Municipal electric ratepayers are, in the vast majority of instances, also property taxpayers. The implications of this fact were best described by Judge Jack Davies in his dissent of a 1991 service territory decision. Davies, a legislator when the service territory law was adopted, noted: "Governance in a city with a municipal utility is conscripted by the relationship between local property tax income and the financial returns from and burden of its municipal power utility. One of the reasons, certainly, that the legislature permitted municipalities to extend service to annexed areas was to permit it to keep all residents on an equal basis as both taxpayers and utility customers. Were a portion of the community to be left out of the benefit—or burden—of local power rates, political problems concerning rate setting and investment decisions could result. These are problems the legislative buy-out authority was designed to avoid."

If the price of acquiring service areas becomes too high, Davies warned, cities would be tempted to leave new portions of their city served by a municipal utility. The consequence, he said, would be "a divided community and a potentially unhealthy political climate."

A local government levying a tax on its citizens has an obligation to treat those citizens equally. Most municipal utilities transfer a portion of their "income" for the year to the city general fund. This dinheiro distribution policy puts a utility resident other than the city, in effect, is subsidized by the municipal utility customers—a subsidy that ought not exist. It is my experience that a municipal utility that does everything in its power to not run afoul of state regulators. Is it too much to ask that state regulators, in this case the DER respect the municipal utilities?

— by Steve Downer, MMUA

Nominations: continued from front page

supporter of MMUA and its members.

• Distinguished Service Award. This award is given to individuals who perform outstanding service in support of the association and its goals.

• Community Service Award. This award is given to an individual who has performed long and well in support of a municipal utility at the local level.

• Rising Star Award. This award recognizes a future leader who has demonstrated a dedication to the goals and principles of municipal utilities through problem solving, creativity, and job knowledge.

• Honorary Lifelong Property Tax Award. This prestigious award symbolizes a long professional life dedicated not only to the advancement of municipal utilities locally, but also for the betterment of our industry on a statewide basis.

Board nominations are also being sought. Two board members—Troy Adams and Kevin Berg—will be completing their second, three-year term. Jenny Hazeltone was appointed to fill the seat of a departing board member, and that term is also ending.

Send nominations by June 15 to Theresa Neddermeyer via email (tneddermeyer@mmua.org), fax (763.551.0459) or regular mail (3025 Harbor Lane North, Suite 400, Plymouth, MN 55447).
District Court rules on issue involving removal of local public utilities commissioner

The Tenth District Court recently ruled that a former member of the North Branch Public Utilities Commission (PUC) must be re-appointed to the commission until the end of a three-year term. He was appointed Dec. 13, 2016. The commissioner removed was not a customer of the municipal electric or water utility and, the city said in a prepared statement, had actively worked to abolish the commission.

City code established the local PUC pursuant to Minn. Stat. 412.331 to 412.391. In establishing the PUC, the city expressly accepted the provisions of Minn. Stat. 412.331 to 412.391.

On Dec. 13, 2016, the plaintiff in the case—the former commissioner—was appointed to serve a three-year term pursuant to Minn. Stat. 412.341, subd. 1, and the city code. At the time he was appointed, he met all the prescribed qualifications to serve as a commissioner.

On Jan. 3, 2017, a newly elected city council held a special meeting where it amended city code relating the PUC. The council required all appointees to the PUC to be a customer of either the PUC’s water and/or electrical services. Minn. Stat. 412.341, subd. 1, and the city code. At the time he was appointed, he met all the prescribed qualifications to serve as a commissioner.

Previously, commissioners could be removed “for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or misconduct in office after notification in writing and hearing.” At a subsequent special meeting, the council, by a 4-1 vote, removed the plaintiff from the PUC because he was not eligible to be a commissioner, as he was neither a customer of city water or electric service. The plaintiff was not afforded notification in writing or a hearing prior to being removed. But council held a special meeting named at the same meeting.

The plaintiff sought summary judgment, as both parties agreed there was no issue of fact. The court noted that state law does not include language for the removal of a PUC member. City councils are provided the authority to appoint officers, employees and agents for the city. Councils are also provided the authority to remove any appointee or employee, to promote the public welfare.

The general removal authority in Minn. Stat. 412.111 specifically authorizes the authority to remove members of a PUC.

In Village of Chisholm v. Bergerson (Minn. 1923), the Minnesota Supreme Court addressed a case with similar facts. In discussing the authority of a village council to remove members of a public utilities commission the Court held, “The general rule is that the power to appoint carries with it the power also to remove.” However, the Court noted that “when a statute creates an office to be filled by appointment for a fixed term, the right to remove is not incident to the power to appoint.”

In examining the framework for the creation and maintenance of a public utilities commission, the Court concluded: “Ordinarily officers or persons appointed by a village council serve in capacities under the supervision and control of the council, or where the council is in a measure responsible for their good conduct. Such appointees are in a sense the servants or agents of the council acting in behalf of the municipality. Here the commission is clearly meant to be an independent department of the village government. If the village council may at will change the personnel, or wholly abolish the commission, its independence and stability is gone, and it becomes a mere servant tool or agent of the council. We think the manifest object of the Legislature was to place the conduct of a municipally owned public business enterprise in the hands of a stable and independent body, free from the baneful influences which so often result from the frequent changes of the political complexion of an elective village council. We therefore conclude the village council of Chisholm had no power to remove respondents.”

Following that decision, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the rule regarding removal of an officer appointed for a term fixed by statute: “The arbitrary power of removal must not be confused with the power of removal for cause. Offices, even though appointive, are usually created for a definite time, as for a given number of years, for life, or for good behavior. In some cases, however, no such tenure is fixed by law, in which cases the power of removal is inseparably incident to the power of appointment and may be exercised arbitrarily at the will of the appointing power. The only effect of fixing the tenure by statute is that the appointing power cannot, in such case, remove the official arbitrarily, but only for cause and after due notice and hearing.”

The District Court noted the following facts:

The city of North Branch established a PUC governed by the Legislature’s statutory authority. Plaintiff was appointed to the PUC for a fixed three-year term. Later, the council adopted amendments to the city code to require all members of the PUC to be customers of the PUC. The amendments also empowered the city council with the authority to unilaterally remove members of the PUC when it was in the best interests of the city and that such removal could be implemented without following the previous statutory framework, which required written notice and a hearing prior to removal. Plaintiff was removed without notice or hearing because he was not an electric or water customer, and replaced with a customer of the water and/or electric utility.

The council, ruled the court, unlawfully removed plaintiff as a PUC member without cause, notice and hearing, as required by applicable laws. At the time the amendment took effect, plaintiff was a duly appointed member of the PUC. The plain language of the Jan. 3, 2017 amendment makes it effective prospectively, without any language showing a clear intent to apply retroactively.

Plaintiff was awarded costs and disbursements.

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A thorny issue was resolved amicably, as the Duluth Public Utilities Commission March 20 approved a resolution that will lower the water supply fee the city charges the cities of Hermantown, Proctor and the township of Rice Lake.

The three political subdivisions will pay $3.02 per 100 cubic feet of water, as of May 1, escalating by 4.7 percent each year through January 2024.

A previous proposal called for similar increases, but would have built on water rates that were steeper than those charged Duluth residents.

The Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission, after extensive study, has determined to pursue membership with Missouri River Energy Services. The local utility projects significant cost savings over time. An agreement will be drafted and go back to the local commission for further study.

The Blooming Prairie planning and zoning board has previously approved a proposed solar energy ordinance. The zoning board recommended adopting the ordinance before the city has a proposal before it.

The Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency also offered local residents, through the Blooming Prairie Public Utilities, the opportunity to invest in the Lemond Solar plant on the west side of Owatonna.

According to published reports, the Minnesota River Valley Public Utility Commission (Le Sueur and Henderson) is contesting new limits on wastewater emissions to the Minnesota River, while Mankato is also questioning proposed phosphorus discharge limits. The city of Mankato questions the science behind the new discharge limits, and argues for a comprehensive strategy including agricultural land.

The city of Buffalo March 5 approved the sale of a $1.77 million electric revenue bond for capital improvements to provide electric service to property that was recently annexed into the northwest part of the city.

The Atkin city council March 5 approved an approximately $2.6 million street/utility improvement project, which is thought to be the largest ever undertaken in the city. The project had been previously approved by the local public utilities commission.

The Springfield city council Feb. 20 approved a $1.6 million street/water/sewer project. The utility portion of the project has been a priority for the Springfield Public Utilities Commission.

The Alexandria Echo Press reported March 7 that ice and snow closed schools, disrupted travel and caused an approximately one-hour outage that affected approximately 1,200 customers of Rumstone Electric Association. The cause was identified as a downed transmission line. ALP Utilities (Alexandria Light and Power) had no reported outages.

The 12-year-old leader of the Nordic Nature Group made a climate change presentation Feb. 7 to visiting staff and board of the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. Board members of the Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission also queried their power agency representatives on carbon emissions. The Grand Marais city council has also reportedly adopted a climate resolution presented to it by the Nordic Nature Group.

Hutchinson Utilities Commission has awarded the contract, to a local bidder, to prepare the foundations for new engines to be delivered in July to Plant No. 1, at the intersection of Minnesota Highways 7 and 15.

The Hibbing Public Utilities Commission has hired a consultant to update information regarding proper allocation of costs, for considering during future rate deliberations.

A compromise agreement between the Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission and Enbridge calls for the removal of 1,000 contiguous feet of Enbridge’s Line 3, which runs through the city’s Wellhead Protection Area. Also, soil testing would be done on two more miles of pipe which runs through an area containing six municipal wells, five of which are active.

If soil testing reveals no contaminants, that section of pipe will be filled with grout and left in place.

The agreement comes as Enbridge seeks approval for a new Line 3.

The city of Grand Rapids has scheduled a neighborhood meeting to discuss the agreement for April 16 (after this writing).
Sutton promoted to Rochester’s director of power resources

ROCHESTER, MN—Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) announced today the promotion of Jeremy Sutton as the new Director of Power Resources.

Sutton served in the United States Marine Corps from 1995 to 2001. After his military service, he was a Senior Plant Operator for Air Products and Chemicals in Southern California, which is a steam methane reforming hydrogen production facility with cogeneration.

He started at Rochester Public Utilities as a system operator and then moved up to the role of Chief System Operator. In 2009, Sutton was tasked with starting a new department at RPU, managing MISO (Mid-continent Independent System Operators) market activities.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) March 8 accepted the certificate of need and route permit applications by Xcel Energy-ITC Midwest for a 345-kV transmission line and referred the case to the Office of Administrative Hearings for contested case proceedings.

The Companies propose to construct a 40- to 50-mile line between Xcel’s existing Wilmarth substation north of Mankato, and ITC’s Huntsley substation, currently under construction south of Winnebago. The project was studied, reviewed, and approved by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator’s (MISO) Board of Directors as a Market Efficiency Project (MEP) in December 2016.

A group called Wind Locked is organizing landowners in Faribault County who are opposed to the proposed Huntley-Wilmarth line. Xcel Energy said the line will provide additional capacity to move wind power from where it is produced to where it is used.

“These are large industrial parks and we just don’t want them,” the group’s organizer was quoted as saying in the Mankato Free Press.

Meanwhile, about 200 Lincoln County area residents attended a public hearing Feb. 21 for the Blazing Star Wind Farm 2. Some supported the project; others opposed. Concerns included the effect on wildlife and the number of blinking red lights atop the turbines.

The MPUC March 15 deemed the environmental impact statement for Enbridge’s proposed Line 3 pipeline to be adequate. Environmental groups and Indian tribes oppose the $2.6 billion project.

The MPUC March 29 ordered the Minnesota Department of Commerce to open a formal investigation of Frontier Communications’ compliance with state customer service regulations. Frontier, based in Stamford, Conn., is a $9 billion company with almost 100,000 landline customers in Minnesota. Of the large volume of complaints reportedly received, about 80 percent concern internet service, which is not state regulated.

A company representative told the MPUC that it wasn’t financially or technologically feasible to upgrade the network to handle customer demands for “bandwidth-intensive” services like Netflix.

Alete, the parent company of Minnesota Power, notified employees in late February that layoffs were possible as the company seeks to cut costs to hit its return on revenue target of 9.25 percent. The communication followed the MPUC’s decision to trim the company’s requested rate hike of $55 million to $13 million annually.

Meanwhile, a group of large customers has told the MPUC that they would rather deal with service interruptions than pay more for power resulting from Minnesota Power’s proposed $700 million natural gas-fueled power project in Superior, Wis. The company has proposed to take 250-megawatts of capacity from the 525 MW plant, which it proposes to share with Dairyland Power Cooperative.

Bloomberg New Energy Finance March 1 said that 25 percent of Minnesota’s energy now comes from renewable sources, meeting Minnesota’s Renewable Energy Standard seven years ahead of schedule. (It should be noted that Xcel’s requirement was 30 percent by 2020 and Xcel makes nearly half of the total sales in the state.)
Henning:
continued from front page

The close relationship between the city and local emergency services is evident in the arrangement of city hall and the ambulance service facility.

The city of Henning water treatment plant and water tower are located next to the school.

Bits: continued from facing page

In response to the report, Governor Dayton was quoted as urging the Legislature “to adopt the ’50 by 30’ Renewable Energy Standard, which legislators from both parties have championed. We must do even more to ensure our children and grandchildren inherit a better future, and a stronger clean energy economy.”

A metro-area solar installer is reportedly under investigation by the Minnesota Attorney General’s office, after it received complaints of fraud, while one county sheriff has reportedly opened a criminal probe of the company. The company was said to have taken deposits but has 120 unfinished projects in Minnesota and Wisconsin.
Four students in MMUA Apprentice Lineworker training program graduate from lineman college

Four students in the MMUA Apprentice Lineworker Training Program recently graduated from the Northwest Lineman College (NLC) Lineworker Certification Program.

Congratulations to Chad Davidson, Moose Lake; Joel Grejtak, Fairfax; Curtis Schramm, Mountain Iron; and Iraeal Wacek, Blooming Prairie. Also, Trevor Morin of Marshall Municipal Utilities has completed the NLC program. MMUA has offered our Apprentice Lineworker Training Program (also known as "On-Site/On-Demand") since 2010. The program involves a combination of cutting-edge academics—offered through Northwest Lineman College—along with on-the-job training, often at the lineman's utility.

Participants must be employed by a municipal utility and are sponsored by their employer. Any lineman who is interested in obtaining journeyman lineman status is encouraged to speak with your employer to determine if this program is a good fit as you strive to achieve your goals.

Apprentice linemen meet, work and talk under the tutelage of MMUA's Apprenticeship Instructor Mike Taylor. Program timing is flexible and hands-on work/instruction is done primarily at your site. The program includes annual 'tuition free' attendance, for each enrollee, to the MMUA Overhead, Underground, Transformer and Meter Schools which take place at MMUA's Training Center in Marshall. Through active participation in the valuable hands-on instruction and diligence in the coursework, participants generally earn the required 8,000 hours of training within 4 years.

For additional information please contact Mike Willetts at mwilletts@mmua.org or 612-802-8474.

**Associate Member News**

Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water System, a rural public water system operating in 10 southwest Minnesota counties, has joined MMUA as an associate member. The organization is located at 415 E. Benton St., Lake Benton, MN 56149. Phone is 507-369-4248. Website is www.lprw.com

Contact is Jason Overby, general manager. He can be reached at 507-369-4248 or email lprw@citel.com

National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) has joined MMUA as an associate member.

The company is a provider of software solutions and services for utilities and telecoms. NISC offers advanced, integrated solutions featuring automated workflows, electronic approvals and more in billing and customer service areas, accounting, engineering and operations, meter data management, payment channels, cyber security and e-services/apps. Over 20 million consumers in 50 states receive utility or telecommunications services from over 860 companies using NISC advanced solutions. The company is located at One Innovation Circle, Lake St. Louis, MO 63367. Toll-free phone number is 866-999-6472 and fax is 701-667-1936. Website is www.nisc.com.

Contact person is Kimberly Williams, manager growth markets. Her number is 636-755-2569 and email is kimberly.williams@nisc.coop

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Bronze Tapered Sleeves are Easily Maintained
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(Bolts Will Not Vibrate Loose - Reel Will Not Slide on Bar)

Four students in MMUA Apprentice Lineworker training program graduate from lineman college

Among those currently enrolled in the MMUA Apprentice Lineworker program are, from left to right: Paul Parson of Princeton Public Utilities and Andy Echtemach of Adrian Public Utilities, pictured with instructor Mike Taylor of MMUA. This picture was taken at the recent Meter School, which training program enrollees attend tuition free.

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Fourteen municipal employees recently completed the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association First-line Supervision/Leadership course, offered through Central Lakes College. Over 300 municipal employees have completed the leadership series, which is offered at CLC’s Brainerd campus and MMUA headquarters in Plymouth.

The graduates include: Chad Adams of Hibbing; Kristen Beck, Spring Valley; Janell Johnson and Adam Braegelman, Willmar; Tom Fischer, Nick Francis and Chris Gieseke of New Ulm; Jeff Innes, Brainerd; Steve Karels, Baxter; Ardean Kellerhuis, Delano; Roger Knutson, Rushford; Jerry Liebl, Redwood Falls; Jared Quandt, Rochester; Ray Rakoczy, East Grand Forks.

The utility management program was developed in 1988 and has graduates in many MMUA member cities. The program is designed to provide the leadership skills needed in challenging times. The 68-hour course is offered in four three-day sessions over two years. Participants work with and learn from each other, trained facilitators and instructors, internationally recognized leadership materials and specially created units.

Public works directors, finance and office managers, customer service personnel, superintendents, crew supervisors, parks directors, and other employees from a variety of departments have benefited from this highly interactive program that emphasizes core leadership skills, performance management, communication, and handling challenging situations.

Our large group of prior graduates includes: Todd Graves, Dick Thynes, Bill Hawkinson, Brian Peters, Dennis Nesges, Odean Iversen, Steve Wearda, Stacy Stein, Zach Larson, Jeron Smith, Brian Hoover, Joe Baker, Chris Carlson, Scott Schultz, and Kevin Marti of Willmar; Darwin Cole, Julie Batters, LeRoy VanVickle, Scott Magnuson, Julie McCullough, Trent Hawkinson, Clark Backstrom, Brad Olson, and Paul Sandy of Brainerd; Roger Davis, Nick Blesses, Cole Richardson, Mike White, Ryan Foster, and Laurie Oelke of Blue Earth; Troy Zwilling, Randy Czech, Randy Blake, Jerry Ebert, Tony Hand, Corey Harmening, Teri Hofmeister, Jon Hombach, Dave Hunstad, Bruce Krueger, Dan Lang, Jared Martig, Brian Mehr, Jan Sifferath, Nate Smutka, Dale Sturges, Steve Sturgis, Bill Juare, Lonnie Weertz, Tony Caldwell, Mike Lien, Jeremy Carter, Myron Polzin, and Tim Weber of Hutchinson; Paul Twite, Dan Hanson, and Jim Griebel of Delano; Tim Mayo, Amy Kann, Ken Koenick, Chris Voeltz, Jeff Knutson, and Scott Peterson of St. Peter; George Brown, Kris Manderfeld, Del Sonst, Steve Soukup, Jeff Beilke, Dennis Braulick, Dave O’Brien, and Dan O’Conner of New Ulm; Scott Daniels and Jeremy Linden of Princeton.

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Day by day. Project by project.
Together we’re renewing infrastructure and keeping the world in business.
Electrical Superintendent

The City of Winner, So. Dak., is seeking an Electrical Superintendent. This position is responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing the city’s electrical transmission and distribution system. Coordinates, supervises and assists with activities involved in the maintenance and repair of underground and above ground cables, transformers, switches and substations; ensures that assigned personnel adhere to safety and other codes and regulations. Oversees the overall construction, maintenance, inspection, alteration and repair of the distribution system, including determining the type of construction, hardware, and equipment to be used for each job. Recommends to the Public Works Director and Council personnel committee such department personnel needed to operate the department. Oversees training, evaluates and disciplines employees. Prepares the annual department budget request and submits budget to the Public Works Director by the required deadlines. Works with the City electrical engineer consultant to develop the capital improvement program for the department. Experience sufficient to thoroughly understand the diverse objectives and functions of the subunits in the department, usually interpreted to require three to five years of related experience. Must possess a Class A CDL Drivers license and be subject to DOT alcohol and drug testing. City of Winner offers a competitive benefits package and wages range from starting salary of $85,000 annually depending on experience. To apply please submit a cover letter, resume, work and salary history and three work related references to Rhonda Augspurger, Finance Officer, electronic – cityofwinner@gwtc.net or mail: City of Winner, PO Box 691, Winner, SD 57580.

Electric Lead Foreman

St. James Public Utilities is looking for an Electrical Journeymen Lineman for the position of foreman of the electric department. We serve 2,400 residential and commercial customers and maintain and operate an electrical distribution system and a stand-by

continued on facing page:
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MPUC approves Xcel request for variance to billing error rules

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission March 29 approved an Xcel Energy Request for a Variance to the Billing Error Rules. Xcel petitioned the Commission to allow the Company to provide credit to one commercial/industrial electric customer for overcharges due an incorrect application of a rate schedule.

Xcel sought to issue a credit to the customer for the overcharges that the Customer paid during a period outside of the three-year limit set in Minnesota Rules and Xcel's Electric Rate Book. Xcel stated that the overcharges were due to an incorrect application of a rate schedule. Since discovering the error, the Company corrected the billing system. It credited the Customer for the applicable periods provided under the Company's tariff and the Commission's Rules. Xcel indicated that it calculated and provided credit in accordance with Minnesota Rules, part 7820.3800 and calculated interest consistent with Minn. Statutes § 325E.02(b).

The Customer was on a Non-Billing rate and on August 31, 2017 and corrected on August 31, 2018. The Company calculated a total credit of approximately $1,320.46 for the total time-frame both within and exceeding the Commission Regulation and Tariff periods. The Company credited the Customer a total of $628.03 for the amount over-paid during the 3-year period provided for in Rule and Tariff. Xcel calculated and provided the credit in accordance with Minnesota Rules, part 7820.3800 and calculated interest consistent with Minnesota Statutes § 325E.02(b).

The Company stated that, given the amount of time at issue, enforcement of the rule would impose an excessive burden on the Customer by limiting the credit from the total over-billed amount. Further, Xcel stated that granting the variance would not adversely affect the public interest because the credit serves only to make the Customer whole against actual overcharges resulting from the application of the wrong rate schedule. Xcel noted that the Commission has in the past approved a utility's voluntary credit beyond the time period required by Minnesota Rules when special circumstances exist.

While the particular statute and rule cited in the dock- et do not apply to municipal utilities, the situation may well be of interest to municipal utilities.

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April 2018 The Resource/11
MMUA safety staff to present on various topics at national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo

There are a number of events around the April 28 Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo, and MMUA safety and training staff will serve as instructors the day before, during Training Track courses. Joe Schmidt, Regional Safety Coordinator, and Bob Sewell, Generation and Safety Coordinator, will make a two-hour presentation on Meaningful Job Briefings—Safety & Compliance in Harmony.

The course description reads: Job briefing—are we being brief when discussing the job or are we brief about the job? OSHA requires that prior to a job the person in charge shall present all the available information that relates to the determination of existing characteristics and conditions. So, what does that mean?

Through case studies of successes and failures, attendees will learn how to conduct an appropriate and meaningful job briefing. An overview of job briefing requirements will be covered, along with a look at the job briefing format from the perspective of the employee who’ll be performing the tasks associated with the job.

Shane St. Clair, Regional Safety Coordinator/JTS Instructor, will cover Transformer Connections in another two-hour course.

Attendees will learn the basics of transformers, three-phase transformer connections, and theory. They will review the basics of transformers, including turns ratios, polarities, calculations, connections, and troubleshooting. They will also discover the basic three-phase systems with some basic phasor diagrams and the relationship of the phasor to the transformer itself, and also learn about basic three-phase connections, delta connection, wye connection, open delta connection, and troubleshooting transformers.

The Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo is the foremost showcase of public power lineman skill and knowledge. At the Rodeo, journeyman and apprentice lineworkers compete for professional recognition, attend training courses, and practice essential skills in a safe environment. Furthermore, attendees have a unique opportunity to connect with and learn from the nationwide community of lineman professionals.

The 2018 Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo training events will be held April 27 in Raleigh, N.C., and the Rodeo itself will be April 28 in Wake Forest, NC.